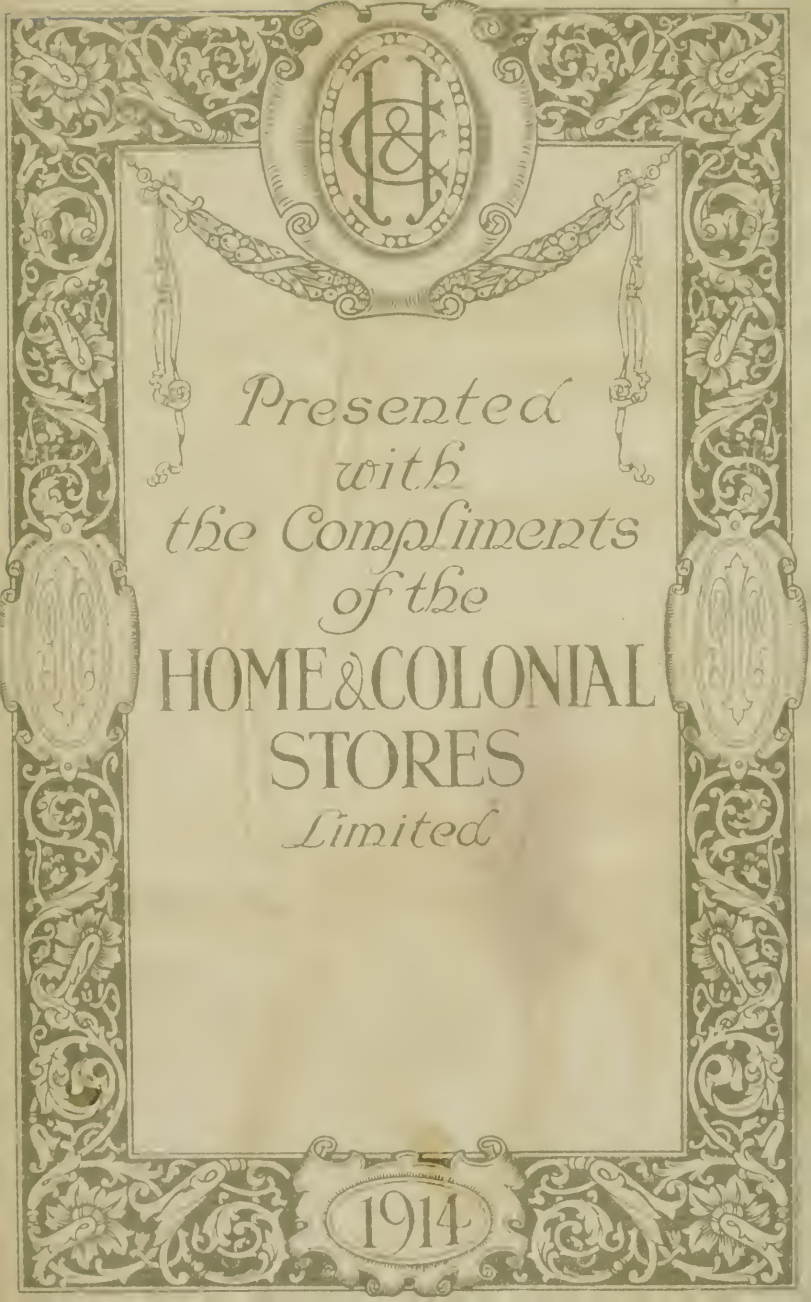



A TIME OF  
TERROR





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A  
TIME OF TERROR

The Story of a Great Revenge  
(A.D., 1910)


This England never did, nor never shall  
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,  
But when it first did help to wound itself,  
*King John*

SECOND EDITION

LONDON  
GREENING & CO., LTD.

1906

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Dedicated  
TO  
MY FELLOW CITIZENS  
IN  
"THIS GREAT BABYLON,"  
AND,  
IN PARTICULAR,  
TO MEMBERS OF THE THREE  
LEARNED PROFESSIONS

*London: New Year's Day, 1906.*

CHARACTERS

MARCUS WHITE

SIR JOHN WESTWOOD

BOBBY HERRICK

FATHER FRANCIS

DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR HENSHAW

BILLY OF MAYFAIR

THE MARQUIS OF DOWNLAND

THE LORD MAYOR

RAGGETT THE RAVER

JOE THE STABLEMAN

P.C. DORMER

ALDWYTH WESTWOOD

MOLLY BARTER

BILLY'S GRANDMOTHER

MRS JOE

CROWNED HEADS

*Episcopate—*

THE ARCHBISHOP OF LONDON (NEW PROVINCE)

*Royal Navy—*

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR LAMBERT MEADE, K.C.B.

*Judges and Magistrates—*

LORD MALVERN, L.C.J.; MR JUSTICE BARLING;

MR HARROWDEN

*Counsel—*

MR DUFFUS JACOBS, K.C.; MR BRILL, K.C.;

MR DAWSON DALTON

*Medical Faculty—*

DR WILSON WAKE

THE LEAGUERS OF LONDON, POLICE, THE UNEMPLOYED, ETC.

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# A Time of Terror

## PROLOGUE

(A. D. 1885)

### PART I

#### A HERITAGE OF HATE

THE Court was densely crowded, and an atmosphere already vitiated became doubly poisonous now that the ushers had lighted the gas. The flaring jets revealed on every side the flushed and strained faces of those who were eagerly waiting for the verdict. A great number of women had been present at the Old Bailey throughout the trial—women of fashion, eager to be thrilled by the most potent sensation of the hour, and women of the lower orders, mostly Irish. A babble of excited conversation arose directly the judges and the jury left the Court. There were three judges, for this was an

alleged case of treason felony. In technical language the four prisoners were indicted for having feloniously compassed, devised, and intended to depose our Lady the Queen from the style, honour, and royal name of the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom, and further that they, with divers other persons unknown, did manifest such intent by certain overt acts; all of which was set out with the customary amount of verbiage in the indictment.

Reduced to plain English, the actual charge was that the accused had purchased arms and ammunition for distribution amongst a revolutionary brotherhood; that they had been concerned in storing gunpowder and other explosive materials for the purpose of wrecking public buildings and overthrowing the Government of the Queen. Chester Castle, with its great store of arms, was to be seized. Arms were to be transmitted in piano packing-cases by the mail train from Euston, and the express was to be held up on the route to Holyhead. Thereafter the rails were to be torn up, the telegraph wires cut, and an armed band of two thousand men was to take forcible possession of the mail boat and land in due course on the Irish coast.

None of these things, beyond the purchase

of a limited quantity of arms and ammunition, had really come to pass ; but, as usual, the inevitable informer had revealed the alleged plot to the Government. Four arrests had been made, but the principal efforts of the prosecution were vigorously employed to obtain the conviction of one prisoner in particular—Michael White.

This prisoner was a journalist, hitherto living in one of the suburbs of London, and acting as correspondent for certain journals in Ireland and in America. Under a search warrant the police had ransacked every corner of his house. They found what purported to be an incriminatory letter written in invisible ink, also a glass tube containing a liquid which, when tested by the Government analyst, was proved to contain crystals. These crystals, if dissolved in water, could be used for the purpose of making impressions on paper, and such impressions would be invisible until copperas or certain other chemicals had been applied. Beyond these discoveries and the evidence of the informers, there was but little to connect Michael White with the alleged conspiracy.

The prisoner was a handsome, middle-aged man, whose intellectual face was in striking contrast with those of the two shifty-eyed and cringing informers, on whom from time

to time he bent looks of infinite disgust and scorn. The sympathy of not a few was with the accused; but so strenuous was the conduct of the prosecution, and so adverse the judicial summing up, that only one result could be expected from the trial.

One member of White's family was present through the long and agonising trial—the prisoner's only son, and there was a double bitterness in the young man's heart as hour by hour he saw the net being weaved about his father, for he, himself, had his own personal reason for hating Westwood, the zealous junior counsel for the Crown. When the fierce eyes of young Marcus White met the barrister's, the latter shifted his gaze, fumbled with his papers, or made a show of entering into conversation with other counsel. The prisoner's son watched these poor devices with a contemptuous smile. A complex, burning sense of wrong filled his breast. The private wrong which he believed had been done to himself by Westwood, blended, as it were, with the wrong that he conceived was being done to his father; and this in turn was interwoven with the sense of wholesale wrong inflicted during centuries upon prisoners and captives who had come within the iron grip of English criminal law.

Marcus White, like his father, was a man



of no small intellectual power. A journalist who is to write anything worth reading must read much before he writes, and the prisoner's son had read much. At one time it had been intended that he should join the army of advocates, but he turned away with repugnance after a preliminary survey of the law. Later, his father, to whom he was devotedly attached, gave him some training in his own profession, the profession of the pen. The elder White had long had in hand a book on the subject of barbarous punishments, and his son diligently assisted him in looking up and collating ancient records of the shocking violence in times past done to humanity under the sanction of the law. He knew that the English Criminal Code included at one time nearly two hundred offences punishable with death; he knew that this dreadful catalogue comprised innumerable offences of the most trifling character, while it omitted enormities of the utmost atrocity.

A study of these penal statutes and their ruthless application had shattered his instinctive reverence for the law and its administration. He had learnt to see in the sanguinary monuments of so-called justice the oppression of the strong, the cruelty of the cowardly, a terrible revelation of "man's

inhumanity to man." His mind revolted at the idea of a divine right in kings to hang, draw, and quarter any one who criticised their conduct or advocated another form of government. It was, he held, only the *Lex talionis*, supported by force, and all the traps and complexities of criminal pleading were but the miserable devices of lawyers ever ready to prostitute a calling that in itself was noble. History proved it—history of which nearly every page was stained with judgments of expediency or the dark crime of judicial murder. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," was supposed to have come from the poisonous lips of such creatures as Titus Oates. The judge—he might be a Jeffreys or a Scroggs—was but the Government in wig and ermine. The Crown counsel were paid pleaders for the party in power. The docile jury, ruled by the judge, were in effect the most obedient servants of the Government. This, then, was human justice—which in its true essence was supernal and divine. This was the Western Baal that men were called on to revere!

Rightly or wrongly, thus he reasoned. From such thoughts there had sprung up and still was growing and destined to grow in the mind of Marcus White a loathing for

the law and a desire for vengeance on all who followed it as servitors. Such were the feelings with which he had seen his own father caught in these dreadful toils; practised advocates, perjured witnesses, and crafty detectives, all combining to bring about the climax that was imminent.

There was a cry of "Silence!" The jury were stumbling back into the box; the judges returned to the bench. Amid a breathless stillness the Clerk of Arraignment put the accustomed questions: "Do you find the prisoner, Patrick Desmond, guilty or not guilty?"—"Not guilty."

"Do you find the prisoner, John O'Leary, guilty or not guilty?"—"Not guilty."

"Do you find the prisoner, Robert Dale, guilty or not guilty?"—"Not guilty."

Then, last of all, "Do you find the prisoner, Michael White, guilty or not guilty?" The pale face of the foreman twitched; there was a momentary hesitation in his manner. Every ear was strained to catch the verdict. Then, in a low voice, it came,—"Guilty."

There was a swift scratching of pens. The Clerk of Arraignment was recording the verdict on the parchment of the long indictment, the judge was noting it, the counsel were indorsing the result upon their briefs, but

the eyes of all others were on the face of the prisoner at the bar.

“Michael White,” said the Clerk of Arraignment, “you stand convicted upon this indictment. Have you any cause to show why the Court should not pass judgment upon you?”

“I have to say,” answered the prisoner, in a clear, strong voice, “that I had no hand in this so-called plot. My conviction has been brought about by perjured evidence and trickery; but, my lord, do not suppose that I shall whine for mercy. I am not the first man to suffer for a cause. I love my native land, and I hate those who oppress it. If my life could be the price of justice to Ireland and the Irish I would gladly lay it down; if the hand that I now raise to heaven could bring vengeance on those who have wronged us I should rejoice; and though death or prison-house make me powerless, with my last breath I would whisper to my son to carry on the work.”

For a moment the prisoner's face was turned towards his son's, and there were those in Court who saw and afterwards recalled the answering look.

Then Michael White received, unmoved, his sentence.

Penal servitude for life.

## PART II

## RIVALS IN LOVE

“STAND aside,” said Westwood, in a voice which he vainly strove to steady.

“Not yet,” was the savage answer; “you’ve got to listen!”

The two men faced each other in the calm starlight of the April evening. The Embankment was almost deserted save for the huddled, heedless outcasts on the benches. A few hansoms rattled westward; a few small vessels, with sails spread, moved ghostly and silent on the swirling river. Nature’s placidity was in strange contrast with the fiery passion that flamed in the eyes of Marcus White and found expression in his threatening gestures. Both men were pale; their facial muscles tense. But the pallor of the one was begotten of anger and hatred. With Westwood it was the outcome of nervous apprehension, if not of actual fear.

“This is folly,” he said, with a better effort at self-command. “So far as I am concerned you have nothing to complain of——”

“Nothing to complain of,” exclaimed White. “What! You steal the girl who was mine. Yes, mine,—until you sneaked in between us——”

“That is not true, White.”

“I say you stole her—she was beguiled away from me. I was poor, and likely to be poorer. You had your profession, your respectability, and your prospects. Curse you! You’re not fit to touch her hand. Nor am I. I know that well enough; but I love her, and always shall. She was everything to me—my strength, my hope—till you stepped in; and to-night I’d think no more of taking you by the throat and ending your mean life than I would of crushing a beetle or any other filthy thing beneath my heel.

“I’m sorry if you think——” began Westwood. Then he paused, half ashamed of his own propitiatory tone, but debating how he could appease the fury of his enemy and escape from a situation which had become so threatening.

“And not content with taking her from me,” the other went on, drawing a step nearer and speaking with increased intensity, “you stood up in Court to prosecute my father. You and the others have helped to send him into slavery for life. The prosecution was a lie, I say, and you lied as much as any of the witnesses. Not on oath; that wasn’t wanted. You saw your chances, and you laid hold of them. You got the advertisement you wanted. There was deviltry in your pretended moderation. But you



know the tricks of your trade—your looks and gestures to the jury said what you dared not put in words. He was in the dock and you were at the bar, with all its privileges and all its honourable traditions! Faugh! You sickened me. Yours was the face I watched; not the judge's; not the foreman's when he stood up and gave the verdict——”

“Let me pass, man; you're acting like a madman,” said the barrister.

“Ah! You're afraid of me. Coward! coward! You daren't deny it.”

Westwood glanced round. He had been kept late at his chambers in Paper Buildings, and near the corner of Temple Avenue had come suddenly upon this enemy whom, of all men, he least desired to meet. The stream of wheeled traffic came steadily across Blackfriars Bridge and branched off right and left, but on the footway of the Embankment still scarcely a creature was to be seen. Westwood spoke again.

“I only did my duty. The brief came to me because of the illness of another man, and I was bound to take it. You ought to understand that legal etiquette——”

“Legal etiquette!” exclaimed White scornfully, “etiquette that allows you lawyers to libel other men and twist and turn the truth to suit your case. Etiquette that justifies

your taking fees you don't earn, and neglecting cases when it suits you. For you and your brood there is no sort of penalty. You pose as good citizens. You talk yourselves into Parliament, and fawn on the Government when there are places to be given away. You sit on the Bench and draw a year's salary for little more than half a year's work, and send to penal servitude men in whose presence you ought to stand bareheaded."

"I can't stay here and listen to your raving," said Westwood angrily.

"You've got the best of it at present. You've had us every way," persisted White. "There's nothing left for me in England. That suits your purpose, too. But, mark my words, Westwood, I haven't done with you. Sooner or later the tables shall be turned. I swear by heaven they shall! Some day you'll hear of me again!"

Ending, he spat on him. Then, with a contemptuous gesture, turned away. Westwood, with a movement of disgust and anger, took two steps as if to follow him; then hesitated, stopped.

Marcus White did not even condescend to turn his head, but, striding eastward, passed into the shadows of the London night.



## CHAPTER I

### LONDON IN 1910

AN Englishman returning to his native land after an absence of twenty-five years, might not at first discover much difference in the look of London. There stood the old familiar landmarks—Buckingham Palace, St James's, the Marble Arch, Apsley House, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, the National Gallery, the British Museum, St Paul's, the Tower, the Monument, and many another well-remembered building. There were new hotels, new theatres, new buildings of all sorts, and at least one notable new thoroughfare. In the great arteries of business the old familiar thunder of the traffic rose louder than ever, with the modern addition of a new smell and a new noise—the smell and the whir of the motor-car. The mean streets were as mean as ever; the contrast between this and that locality more than ever noticeable.

And the people, save for the scarcely perceptible change in fashion of dress, at first looked pretty much the same. There were more loafers, more wastrels, more sprawling scarecrows of humanity in the parks, and along the Embankment. The richest city in the world still had thousands and more thousands of homeless, miserable creatures in its midst, thousands whom the State knew not how to save for their own sake, or for the service of England.

It would be obvious to the returned native that the old country must long since have ceased to be a "merry England." The look on the faces of the people was enough to settle that. The intent gaze, the joyless expression, told a convincing tale. Here and there might be seen a flower of beauty in the gigantic garden of weeds—a stalwart, handsome man, a "perfect woman, nobly plann'd." Eyes of youth, looking eagerly upon the page of life, still shone with the glow of hope and happiness; young girls and young children, in their freshness and charm, still reminded the wayfarer that in the great design human beings were meant to be even more beautiful than the flowers of the field. But the vast crowd—what had come to it, and what was coming? Was the English race, as a race, growing not only plain, but positively ugly?

When the home-comer found time to move about a little, he would discover that in many respects the changes wrought in twenty-five years were greater than he had supposed. There were, in outlying districts, certain new or enlarged buildings of formidable aspect. These were the lunatic asylums of the capital. The inquirer had to learn that insanity had been advancing by leaps and bounds. Five years ago the number of London lunatics was nearly 27,000, and now there were nearly 100,000 certified lunatics in London. The workhouses also were larger and fuller than ever; and in the City, the scene of the trial of Michael White in 1885, the old court-house, haunted with the horrors of centuries, had given place to a new and imposing building, with greater accommodation for criminals. Solid, handsome, stony, the New Bailey frowned down on the new generation of Londoners. The City Fathers were justly proud of their modern palace of justice, though the question of what motto should be inscribed over its portal gave rise to some difference of opinion. A very reverend dean suggested, "Defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong-doer," or words to that effect. In what way the New Bailey was going to fulfil the first part of the text did not seem to be quite obvious

but certainly the massive sessions-house looked quite equal to punishing the evil-doer. It did not occur to any one to recommend a text from the Koran, which declares that to endure and forgive is the highest achievement for humanity. Probably the City Fathers did not read the Koran. Besides, though in the interval we had allied ourselves with worshippers of Buddha, England as yet had no treaty with the unspeakable Turk. A quotation from the sacred book of Islam might have been considered out of place in a nominally Christian country.

Such were some of the changes brought about in a quarter of a century. A person of cynical mind might well doubt whether they were changes for the better. For the rest, the people crowded hither and thither—underground, by tubes in all directions; above ground, on foot, and by vehicles of every description—mostly “motors.” By means of the latter insignificant persons tore through the streets, bound on errands of no importance. The private “motors,” of course, were owned by the pleasure-seekers of the age, who, for all their hurry, probably had nothing more urgent to do than to order luncheon at a fashionable restaurant, or purchase a box of cigarettes.

Postal deliveries had been multiplied; tele-

phone facilities increased. Everything was essentially modern; the great thing was to be up to date. But all the new facilities for saving time and trouble seemed to have resulted in leaving very little time for anything. Certainly there was no time for studying the past of England and of the British race; and as to the future, a great many persons believed that, for individuals, it was as mythical as Mrs Harris.

The so-called educated classes, when not following the compulsory routine of their daily lives, were primarily engaged, as to the young men, in the frenzied pursuit of sport; and as to the young women, in the vital study of dress, varied by a steady perusal of their favourite authoresses in the domain of fiction.

Newspapers, of course, were scanned—by the male population, at any rate; but people were not equal to the intellectual exertion of reading an unbroken column. News and notes had to be administered on the homœopathic principle, in scraps and snippets. And as the Bible had not yet been abridged, it necessarily followed that that was the very last book that up-to-date people could find time or interest to study.

Lives of great men were still available

to remind the moderns to make their lives sublime. But, then, the moderns could not find time or inclination to read the ancients. The sublime, in their view, was not only close to, but identical with, the ridiculous. Certainly they could not concern themselves with any nonsense about leaving footprints on the sands of time. Everybody, however, found time to read lengthy law reports arising from scandals in high life.

A considerate aristocracy had of late done more and more to gratify public taste in that respect. The "upper classes" quarrelled about their children, about their heirlooms, about the "other man," or the "secret woman," about anything and everything. But, in spite of all, the average Briton, with inborn snobbishness, dearly loved a lord. Kind hearts were at a discount; but coronets fetched heavy premiums, especially in the American market. Broadly speaking, "simple faith" was non-existent; but Norman blood, however vitiated, covered in a double sense the multitude of sins. The Divorce Court had virtually become a public laundry, in which judge, counsel, and witnesses were constantly engaged in washing the soiled linen of the British peerage, a task varied, however, by similar operations on behalf of the ladies and gentlemen of the stage.

The business classes, still solid, stolid, and worried, were mostly occupied in efforts to put money in the purse to an extent sufficient to meet the ever-growing expenses of modern life in England. By reason of this problem, there were fewer marriages than of yore; and, yet more significant, the birth-rate fell and fell. There was still great wealth in England, but it was in fewer hands. The Jew syndicates, the drink-sellers, the drapers, and the betting agents largely absorbed the nation's gold. But the poor in pocket were by no means poor in spirit. Pampered and petted by political parties, the British working-man had realised the uses of the weapons placed at his disposal. He had a vote, and he used it, whereas the middle-class man did not. He had the weight of numbers behind him, and he meant to use that too. Yet, notwithstanding all these indications of decay, there was still in every rank a goodly leaven; the problem was, whether there was enough of it to leaven the whole lump, and resuscitate the nation. If, instead of the return of the native after only twenty-five years, the boy-poet, Keats, could have come back (from that bourn whence no traveller returns), after nearer a hundred years, it is to be feared he still would have found an "inhuman dearth of noble natures," and still gloomier signs—



“Of all the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching.”

It was a covetous age, but it did not covet earnestly the best of gifts :

“Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance,  
Which bars the pit over Destruction’s strength.”

But Shelley, like Keats, was forgotten, or unknown. The age of mediocrity had no concern with intellectual giants ; the period of small men, with parochial ideas, nothing in common with great conceptions of—

“Love from its awful throne of patient power,”  
looking down upon humanity ; or of humanity ready—

“To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;  
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates.”

It was “Everyone for himself,” but not “devil take the hindmost” ; because belief in the Prince of Darkness, like belief in many other things, had largely been discarded.

The signs and the sounds of the times were many and various ; but, not in England only—perhaps less in England than abroad—the most arresting was the diapason note of a steady march. The rolling rhythm of a mighty organ ; the tramp, tramp, tramp of the many millions, drawing nearer and nearer.



## CHAPTER II

### AT THE NEW BAILEY

FOR three days public attention had been riveted on another sensational trial that had packed the New Bailey with an excited audience, and filled the report columns of the London papers. It was alleged that a daring and gigantic fraud had been practised on charitable persons, and, what was worse, not merely on persons, but on personages, highly placed in Church and State. Many distinguished victims had gone into the witness-box, and told their tale; and therein, for the time being, lay the main interest of the trial. Again, ladies of social celebrity, eager for a new sensation, had importuned city officials and the Judge himself for the equivalent of stalls to see the show. The Society journals gushingly described their excellent taste—in the matter of dress.

Lord Malvern, the Chief Justice, had come down to try the case, and his counterfeit

presentment in various attitudes of wisdom or weariness had figured in the *Daily Graphic*, with those of the prisoners, witnesses, and counsel. In this instance the prisoners themselves were persons of little interest or importance; for it was well understood that they were practically dummies, put forward, and, it was said, well paid for running the risk of capture. There was what the papers call a brilliant array of counsel. For the Crown, Sir John Westwood, Solicitor-General, led three other learned gentlemen, of whom "Bobby" Herrick was the least of juniors; and on the other side were ranged five advocates, the best the Bar could produce or money retain—the leaders being the well-known K.C.'s—Mr Duffus Jacobs, Mr Brill, and Mr Dawson Dalton.

The elaborate nature of the conspiracy had only gradually been unfolded. It was amazing in its audacity; and yet in the minds of those who were specially qualified to read between the lines, there was a strong conviction that something much more serious lay behind. It was proved, indeed, that many thousands of pounds had passed into the coffers of the London Emigration League, but it was whispered that not one-tenth of the plunder had been brought to light or traced. The actual figures were believed to

run into scores of thousands, systematically collected under false pretences during a period of ten months and more. Dukes and lesser peers, with bishops, deans, prominent canons of the Church, and City magnates, had been made the puppets of the wire-pullers. As patrons they gave their names as well as their money to this well-sounding scheme, which professed to have for its object the sending of the loafers, wastrels, hooligans, and gaol-birds of the homeland to Canada, Australia, and South Africa. The project found favour, to some extent because it appealed indirectly to self-interest. The growing turbulence of the unemployed and unemployable seriously menaced social order, and the annual expenditure on prisons and workhouses had brought about an enormous increase in the rates.

The scheme of the League, appealing thus to a spurious philanthropy, when once launched, was urged forward day by day under the auspices of illustrious names, and boldly pushed by means of page advertisements in the leading London newspapers. At the Mansion House the Lord Mayor presided over an enthusiastic meeting in support of the League. A resolution, moved by a member of the Royal Family, was received

with plaudits and carried with acclamation. Thereafter, from leading assurance offices, and banking houses, and from City men of wealth and influence, munificent donations flowed in thick and fast. These gifts were freely advertised. The first list drew another list, and so forth. The snowball rolled and rolled.

Doubt and suspicion, whispered here and there, were silenced or pooh-poohed. The League stood out boldly in the light of day. Its huge offices on Holborn Viaduct were filled with an army of clerks and typists by day; and by night its name was flashed ceaselessly, like that of a catchpenny soap or tobacco, before the eyes of wondering passers-by. Reports were issued to subscribers throughout the kingdom, who were given to understand that the colonial branches of the League were being steadily developed into working order, and that soon the farms and industries designed to provide honest labour for the outcasts of the crowded mother country would be available for the eager emigrants.

■ The various colonies indicated were not quite keen in their appreciation of the project. Colonial journals protested against an influx of ex-convicts. Canada wanted population, but it must be population of the right sort; and Australia saw in the scheme a dangerous

likeness to the old transportation system, with all the attendant evils of a penal settlement.

An officer of the League complained strongly in the *Times* of the misunderstanding and obstruction that thus hindered the fulfilment of their meritorious aims. Influential deputations of patrons and vice-presidents went to the Colonial Office, and waited also on the Prime Minister. The Crown agents of the Colonies were interviewed; and, the League, remaining prominently in evidence day by day, drew in, though more slowly as the months went by, additional subscriptions from all classes of society.

Then, suddenly, a bolt fell from the blue. Mr Vandelaire, the owner-editor of the *Detector*, published an article in which he declared in round terms that the whole scheme was an imposture, a colossal fraud in root and branch. He boldly named the leading officials of the League as participators in a nefarious project, and politely informed them that if they considered the article was libellous, his solicitors (the much-paragraphed Messrs Ely & Ely) would be ready to accept service of legal process. Other articles followed, and were eagerly read and quoted. They suggested that there was a rich and reckless man behind the League, the prime mover in

a mammoth project of deception; that the officials in question were, for the most part, figureheads; and finally, that robbery was not the real object of this daring and dangerous organisation.

Questions were asked in Parliament, and evaded in the usual Governmental manner. The *Daily Telephone* devoted columns to the letters of correspondents, some of whom—guileless “constant readers” and others—angrily protested against “malicious attacks upon a great and meritorious scheme,” while, on the other hand, a few vehemently invoked the criminal law and declared that the Treasury Solicitor was a useless functionary unless, in such circumstances, he set the law in motion. Even the law officers of the Crown, sadly injured men who only wanted to draw their enormous salaries in peace and quietness, came in for criticism. Presumptuous persons actually wanted to know what they did for the money. It became quite manifest that the public demanded a prosecution of the League, and meant to have it. Ultimately, and, as it were with infinite reluctance, warrants were applied for and granted.

A prolonged magisterial enquiry resulted, after endless remands, in the committal of the secretary and chief cashier of the League

to take their trial at the Bailey. Such was the stage that had now been reached in this amazing drama of the day.

On a certain Saturday in April—five-and-twenty years after Michael White went down into the silence of imprisonment, soon to pass into the greater silence of a yet narrower cell ; five-and-twenty years after his son had uttered his savage warning to John Westwood, the sequel was beginning to take shape.

As yet it was a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand ; but the cloud was destined to grow to vast proportions, blacker and more threatening as time went on, shadowing London with a great terror of darkness, and begetting fear throughout the length and breadth of England.



## CHAPTER III

### THE LEAGUERS' FIRST MOVE

IN the Solicitor-General's chambers, in Paper Buildings, Bobby Herrick was fuming, and looking at his watch. At intervals Wilson, the head-clerk, fussed in and out with briefs and papers. All the bundles were tied together with the inevitable tape; well may it blush red for the unholy and mendacious things it has enfolded! Westwood's clerk, however, never blushed. For one thing, he had bargained so remorselessly for heavier fees at moments critical for his employer's clients that he had lost the power of feeling shame. For another, he had a thick and doughy skin which preserved the same unhealthy hue at all times and in all places. He was a prosperous man, belonging, it was said, to the ranks of "gigmanity," for he kept his pony chaise at Brixton. There were some who said that Josiah Wilson would sell his little soul for gold if only Mephistopheles



would care to make a bid. He certainly had investments, and his average income from "clerk's fees" (which immemorial usage extracts from the client, instead of from the advocate) was quite substantial. Many a struggling junior at the Bar would have been thankful to earn a third of that average income. Wilson really earned nothing except in the manner indicated; but he wore a silk-fronted frock-coat and a massive watch-chain. Nature, in its abhorrence of a straight line, had taken care that there should be no straight line in the waistcoat which that gleaming chain adorned.

"Sir John's late this morning," said Wilson.

"Yes, I know he is," agreed Herrick impatiently.

"Something wrong, I expect," suggested Wilson, with a shifty look.

"Good heavens! I hope not." Herrick started up. "Why, everything depends on his being in Court. He's going to claim his privilege and reply on the whole case for the Crown."

"He can't if he isn't there," said Wilson. "He was a bit queer yesterday. Liver—that's what it is," he added hesitatingly.

"Confound his liver!" Herrick muttered, under the slight cover of his fair moustache.

“Look here,” he said aloud, “why don’t you ring him up?”

“I might do that,” assented Wilson, but not with enthusiasm.

“He seemed all right in Court yesterday; a bit fagged, nothing more. It’s the House that knocks him up.”

“He wasn’t all right last night when I took down that last report from Scotland Yard.”

“Well, go and ring them up, man. There’s hardly time to get there before the Court sits, and the Lord Chief won’t wait for anyone.”

In a few moments he heard Wilson’s “Are you there?”—the feeble stereotyped inquiry of the telephonist—and presently the tinkle of the bell in the outer room in answer. Herrick felt nervous and excited—moved by an unaccountable apprehension of sinister happenings. So far as he knew at the moment, he had nothing to do but prompt his leader in regard to dates and details, if Westwood’s memory or private notes should fail him. The case had been a professional and financial godsend to the young barrister. Of course he knew perfectly well that the brief had not come to him as the just due of his talents. He was young, untried, and inexperienced—except in his capacity as one

of the lesser " devils " in the Solicitor-General's forensic Hades. The Treasury Solicitor gave him brief No. 4 because it was officially known that it would suit Sir John Westwood to have him in the case. He also happened to be a young fellow of good family, with a not very remote chance of succeeding to an earldom; finally, he was engaged to be married to Sir John Westwood's only daughter.

While Wilson seemed to be trying to extract intelligible information over the wires, Herrick took a turn up and down the slip of a back room in which he worked; then he stood awhile with his bulky brief tucked under his arm, and hands clasped behind him, gazing across the sunlit grass in the gardens. It was a perfect spring morning in point of weather, and Bobby, as the Bar called him, reflected how pleasant it would be if he and Aldwyth Westwood were up the river, or sauntering side by side along the woodland ways.

Suddenly the door behind him was opened, and the staccato voice of a boy-clerk announced, " Miss Westwood."

" Father can't come! Isn't it dreadfully unlucky?" she exclaimed, entering in a whirlwind of " frock and frill."

" Unlucky!" echoed Herrick, turning, aghast; " why, it's the very—— Well, it's

simply disastrous! I firmly believe that unless he has the last word to the jury, they'll acquit those scoundrels. The prosecution will fall through like a house of cards! Is anything serious the matter?"

"I don't know—I can't make out," was the girl's anxious answer. "He seems quite——well, almost stupefied this morning. Of course you know he's not been well for some time past, and last night——" She paused, her lips trembling, tears in her tender eyes.

"My dear girl, I'm so awfully sorry," said Herrick, taking her hand. "It can't be helped. Don't worry; the doctor will pull him round in no time. You sent for one, of course?"

"Yes, I telephoned to Queen Anne Street before I left."

"What message did your father send me?"

"None at all — isn't it dreadful? He seemed quite indifferent, and, as I told you, almost stupefied. When I questioned him, he seemed to have no power to answer clearly. When he spoke, his voice was thick and I could hardly understand a word he said."

"Good heavens! It sounds as if some drug had been at work. I suppose he never——?"

"I am quite sure he never takes a drug of any sort," was the girl's emphatic answer to the unfinished question.

"No, of course not, of course not," said her lover soothingly; then, looking once more at his watch: "Well, I ought to see our other leader at once, that's clear."

"That's Mr Boulton, isn't it?"

"Yes, Boulton. Look here, will you come down to the Bailey in my hansom, and we'll talk about this on the way?"

"Yes, I can do that, and then drive home again," she agreed readily.

"And you must tell Sir John he needn't worry. I daresay the case will work out all right, after all."

"You don't think so really," said Aldwyth, looking with her clear eyes into his.

And in his heart of hearts he did not.

Within a few minutes they were driving eastward as fast as the congested traffic of the street, alleged to have been specially beloved by Dr Johnson, would permit. On Blackfriars Bridge, cabs, omnibuses, vans, and vehicles of all sorts, held back by the raised hand of the constable on duty, were let loose just as the hansom in which the lovers sat had reached the end of Fleet Street. There was nothing unusual or remarkable in being blocked. But what struck Herrick

as distinctly odd was the vast number of low-class pedestrians who were to be noticed streaming over the bridge from the Surrey side, and turning to the right up Ludgate Hill. The crowd impeded the vehicular traffic under the railway bridge, and blocked the narrow turning which gave access to that ancient bit of London, still popularly known as the Old Bailey. As Herrick stood up to pay the cabman presently, he noticed with surprise that other streams of people of the same low order seemed to be converging from Holborn, Giltspur Street, and Newgate Street.

What did it mean? When he had sent Aldwyth off in the hansom with a lover's look for herself and a last message of sympathy for her father, he turned to Henshaw, the detective inspector, who was standing near counsel's entrance to the Courts.

"Where's all this riff-raff coming from," asked the barrister.

"Slums," said Henshaw briefly.

"But why?"

"Ah! that's the question! Honourable members of this precious League, perhaps. There's more in this affair than meets the eye, Mr Herrick."

“The jury won't know what to make of it.”

“Begging your pardon, I think they'll be made to know.”

“What!—intimidation? Surely not!”

“P'raps we'll know more about it after a bit,” said the detective; and, with eyes scanning the growing crowd, he moved quietly away.

“Pass along; pass along there, please,” said the uniformed men, with monotonous iteration; and Herrick, ere he hurried into the building, noticed that half a dozen of the constables were busily employed in keeping the fast-gathering multitude in motion.

“Bad news about Boulton,” were almost the first words he heard in one of the corridors. The speaker was a circuit chum of his, and one of the junior counsel on the other side.

“Why! What do you mean?” he demanded anxiously.

“What! haven't you heard? Set upon by hooligans near St Pancras station last night. Picked up insensible, and taken to the hospital in Gray's Inn Road. We shall be on directly,” and, tilting up his wig, the speaker hurried down the corridor.

A sense of planned events, a fatalistic feel-



ing, gripped Herrick at the heart. Then, with a deep-drawn breath, he turned into the robing room—the armoury of forensic fray. While he robed, he looked round eagerly for Arthur Dutton, who held brief No. 3 for the prosecution. Dutton was a stuff gownsman of many years' experience, a master of criminal pleading—on paper and parchment—and one of the permanent advisers of the Crown. If Dutton were in good form, all might yet be well; though, unfortunately, as advocate he did not usually excel. But Dutton was nowhere to be seen, and that morning nobody had come across him. Of course it might be that he was already in his place in Court, and thither Herrick hurried, entering just as cries of "Silence!" from the ushers heralded the approach of Lord Malvern, the presiding judge.

"Where's Sir John?" asked the Assistant Treasury Solicitor in an anxious whisper. In a few hurried sentences Herrick informed him of the great man's sudden illness.

"Both our leaders absent! Good heavens! What's going to happen?"

What actually happened next was the passing of a telegram from hand to hand until it reached the Treasury official.

"Read that," he said, and sat back in his seat, dismayed.

Herrick read the message. It was as follows :—

“ To *Treasury Solicitor,*

“ *Central Criminal Court.*

“ *Have received telegram reporting dangerous illness of my father. Am leaving town for Windermere.*

“ *From Dutton, Euston Station.*”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CASE THAT FAILED

BOBBY HERRICK was sound in wind and limb; healthy in heart and brain; but for a moment or two he sat dazed and helpless in face of the position that confronted him. The whole thing seemed unreal, impossible, and the monotonous calling of the names of the jurymen fell upon his ears like a buzzing sound of no intelligible significance. The faces in Court blended into a sort of misty phantasmagoria, until out of the mist one face immediately opposite him riveted his attention. Presently it stood out, distinct and well defined, with a watchful look in the dark and piercing eyes, and a sardonic smile on its upward curving lips. It was a face to be remembered; a face he was destined to see again in the course of those tragic episodes which the history of events in London was shortly to unfold.

The Treasury Solicitor, he found, was pluck-

ing at his gown. "You must ask for an adjournment," he whispered urgently; "it is the only thing to do." Almost at the same moment the judge's voice was heard. His lordship spoke with eye directed towards the vacant seats of the prosecuting counsel.

"Where are your leaders, Mr Herrick?"

Herrick rose amid the silence that succeeded the inquiry, conscious that every eye in Court was fixed upon him.

"My lord," he said, in a voice slightly tremulous at first, "by a most unfortunate and remarkable combination of events, my learned friends are prevented from being present."

"Surely not all of them!" exclaimed the judge. "I heard some rumour of an accident to Mr Boulton—is it true?"

"He was attacked and maltreated in the street last night, my lord, and is now in hospital."

"Another example of the growing spirit of lawlessness which prevails in this city," said the Chief Justice sternly. "I deplore the absence of Mr Boulton, especially for such a reason; but where is the Solicitor-General?"

"I regret to inform your lordship that he has been seized with sudden and, I fear, serious illness."

“This is most extraordinary,” said the Chief Justice, leaning back and taking off his glasses.

“Silence!” cried the usher, as a hum of subdued comment arose in the body of the Court.

“What makes the position still more serious, my lord,” continued Herrick, “is the absence of Mr Dutton also, for reasons of a family nature.”

“Is there no likelihood of his being here presently?”

“He has been summoned to the north of England, and left Euston this morning, my lord, as stated in this telegram.”

“A chapter of accidents, indeed! Well, Mr Herrick, *you* are here.”

“Yes, but being taken by surprise, I am quite unable to do justice to the prosecution, and my instructions are to ask your lordship to adjourn the trial.”

“To that the defence cannot possibly assent,” interposed Mr Jacobs, on his feet instantly. “I speak at any rate for the prisoner whom I represent.”

“I say the same on behalf of my client, my lord,” added Mr Brill.

“Well, Mr Herrick——?” from the judge.

“My learned friend is too modest,” said Jacobs.

“*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,*” retorted Herrick, with happy inspiration.

Lord Malvern laughed a silent little laugh, and an audible little laugh went round the Court from those who understood the tag, and from those also who laugh because others laugh ; for always man, as Lord Beaconsfield truly observed, is mimetic.

Then the brief flash of merriment died out, and the Court came back to business.

“It is perfectly clear that the trial must proceed,” said the learned judge. “Much public time has already been devoted to the case, and, I may add, much public money. The convenience of the jury and of many witnesses must be considered. This is the fourth day we have been here, and it is desirable on every ground that it should be the last.”

“But, my lord, the Crown will lose the benefit of Sir John Westwood’s reply on the whole case.”

“Sir John Westwood is not here, Mr Herrick.”

“And the privilege of a law officer of the Crown in the connection mentioned is thought by some to be the more honoured in the breach than in the observance,” remarked Mr Jacobs.

“On this occasion you are for the defence,

Mr Jacobs," said his lordship. "On another occasion——" His lordship paused, with a humorous twinkle in his eye, and the gap was filled with a burst of laughter this time; for it was well known that the successful Hebrew advocate had his unsatisfied ambitions.

"Are there any witnesses for the defence?" asked the Chief Justice, when silence was restored.

"I call none," said Mr Jacobs; and Mr Brill merely shook his head by way of answer for his client.

"Very well, then, it only remains for Mr Herrick to address the jury. Counsel for the prisoners will follow, and my summing-up will not occupy more than an hour. The jury will understand," said his lordship, turning towards them, "that however unfortunate the absence of the leading counsel, and however valuable the speeches of those who are present, it is upon the facts, and the facts alone, that their verdict must be based, according to the evidence. Now, Mr Herrick."

. . . . .

Thus it came about that greatness of a sort was thrust upon Aldwyth Westwood's lover. Thus did fortune place in his way a golden opportunity. But this is no story of



a young barrister's triumphant achievement, according to the interesting precedents recorded by the lady novelists. Young Herrick, at this stage of the strange and terrible game then opening, was little better than a pawn on the chessboard of a master-player. Throughout the moves that followed on that Saturday in April, he felt half conscious of the fact, and the face which had looked out of the mist at the beginning seemed to dominate him until the end.

Herrick, thought most of his friends, rose to the occasion, dealing effectively with the complex facts and figures of the case. There were others who shrugged their shoulders, and merely conceded that he "did his best," considering how heavily he was overweighted. In reality, the performance was nothing to be ashamed of; nothing to boast of. The older and more experienced advocates on the other side paid him some handsome compliments when their innings came. But that did not prevent them from making mince-meat of his arguments, and hammering home their own. It may be doubted, however, whether the most powerful advocate who ever breathed the air of the Criminal Courts of England would have drawn a verdict of Guilty from the jury.

The judge, in his lucid summing-up, virtu-

ally told them to convict; but there were other and more powerful influences at work. As the trial proceeded, the voice of a great crowd outside the walls of the Court rose in tumultuous sounds at intervals. In spite of the efforts of the police, it became only too plain that there was a demonstration—organised, determined; and that, for reasons then but imperfectly understood, the acquittal of the prisoners was demanded. It was, in effect, the first skirmish in that campaign against the forces of law and order, of which, presently, London was to be the battleground. The voice of the people prevailed. After an hour's absence, and sundry messages of inquiry from the Chief Justice, the jury returned into Court with a verdict of "Not guilty."

"And that is the verdict of you all," echoed the Clerk of Arraignment in the usual formula.

Here and there in the packed Court there was an involuntary exclamation.

"Silence! silence!" came from the ushers and police.

"The prisoners will be discharged," said the judge, whose manner had assumed the utmost gravity, "and," he added significantly, "the jury will be discharged also from further duties in the box during the present sessions."

Lord Malvern left the Bench as the two prisoners disappeared down the steps leading from the dock.

A babel of voices arose outside the building, and grew, unchecked, until it became a mighty roar of triumph from the mob.

The verdict was known ; cheer after cheer broke out, and the accused, prisoners no longer, were received as heroes, and borne shoulder high from the gates of the prison, through the streets of London.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LEAGUERS' SECOND MOVE

RUMOUR has many wings, and, though the following day was Sunday, rumour fluttered through clubland in the morning, giving rise to many languid speculations concerning the true inwardness of the New Bailey episode of the previous day. It was regarded, for the most part, as an isolated incident, and not as the first link in a chain of significant events. It only began to be recognised in the latter character when it became known that the telegram which had drawn the well-known Treasury counsel, Arthur Dutton, to the north, was an absolute forgery, and devoid of any sort of truth or justification. In the light of this discovery, the attack which had incapacitated his leader, Mr Boulton, assumed a sinister suggestiveness. But even then, there was no one in the West End clubs who attributed the inopportune, or opportune, illness of Sir John Westwood to any other than purely natural causes.

Some light might have been thrown on that point by his trusted clerk, or, indirectly, by Wilson's wife, who on Sunday afternoon found her husband contemplating a bank-note with interest so thoughtful and absorbed that he did not hear his better-half approach.

"Bless and save us! what are you staring at there?" demanded Mrs Wilson, who always was tart of tone and imperative in manner.

"It's a Bank of England note," was Wilson's reply.

"How much?" demanded Mrs Wilson.

"Five hundred pounds," said Wilson, slowly; and he straightway lied according to his lights, when the wife of his bosom, who had the instincts of a cross-examiner, pursued her vehement inquiries.

Meanwhile, the weather being charming, London society had been taking its Sunday airing in Hyde Park under surprising and inconvenient conditions. Between three and four o'clock great numbers of people of the type that had visited the Old Bailey on the previous day assembled on the south side of the Serpentine. Here, lining the rails, they shouted, yelled, and hooted at the passing carriages, to the surprise and alarm of their elegantly-attired occupants. Whistling,

groans, and discordant noises filled the air. The turbulent throng grew and grew, and under the shield of popular excitement, thieves, pickpockets, and other disorderly persons employed themselves with their accustomed diligence. A hulking youth ran before a carriage and repeatedly struck the horse's nose with his cap. Mud was thrown at some of the brilliant sunshades that flashed past, and a gentleman on horseback was almost unseated by part of a hurdle thrown at him by a ruffian lurking in the crowd. Horses plunged; some fell; while the mob expressed its feelings in triumphant jeers and mocking laughter. Presently volleys of stones began to fly, and as yet the police were present in such small numbers as to be practically helpless in the face of this unlooked-for display of ruffianism.

But while the unexpected was happening in the Park, the more or less expected had come to pass not far away. Sir John Westwood lived in Hill Street, and it had been his fate, as representing the Government, to incur the resentment of the masses by bringing into the House a Sunday Trading Bill of somewhat drastic character. The people—particularly the East-enders—were savage at the attempt to close the public-houses on the first day of the week, and jeered at the

suggestion that they should go to church as an alternative resort.

On the Saturday evening, a handbill was widely circulated in the lower quarters of the capital. This was how it ran :

LET US GO TO CHURCH  
WITH SIR JOHN WESTWOOD TO-MORROW.  
AFTERWARDS THERE WILL BE A  
GRAND OPEN-AIR FÊTE AND MONSTER  
CONCERT IN HYDE PARK.

COME AND SEE HOW RELIGIOUSLY  
LONDON SOCIETY OBSERVES THE SABBATH.

Thus it came about that a crowd of many hundreds gathered in front of the Solicitor-General's house, and held their ground obstinately, notwithstanding the persuasive efforts of a small body of police to move them on. No actual violence was used by the crowd, but their groans, yells, and persistent clamour were sufficiently alarming.

To Aldwyth Westwood, a girl of spirit, the demonstration caused more indignation than fear. Her chief concern was for her father. Sir John had now recovered to some extent from his strange condition of physical inertness on the previous day. Silent, but manifestly disturbed, he sat in his study at the back of the house, compelled to listen to the



tumult of execration directed against him in the street. He was for drastic measures with the mob, but the divisional superintendent was either timid or discreet. He met the angry inquiry whether London was to be at the mercy of a hooting mob, by saying that he had no orders to resort to force to clear the street, and that patience and time were the best remedies, so long as no actual violence was attempted. The Solicitor-General acquiesced with a contemptuous shrug; as also in the advice that the front shutters should be closed, and the frightened servants directed not to show themselves.

Stolid and calm, the police stood on the doorsteps, and in the area, while the roughs shouted themselves hoarse. At the end of a couple of hours came news that things were growing lively near the Serpentine; and thereupon, nearly half the Hill Street crowd hastened to the Park in search of something fresh and more exciting. Hastily, but still not sufficiently, reinforced, the police now attempted to check the conduct of the crowd, which had already driven all but a few of the pluckier carriage people homeward. Many of the most disorderly characters had now mustered near the Royal Humane Society's Receiving House. A body of police, with truncheons drawn, marched along the drive

to clear it of pedestrians. Those who would not give way were pushed or roughly handled. The same tactics were pursued on the foot-path on the south side of the Serpentine, and here much confusion and excitement arose, many persons being forced ankle-deep into the water. Women, who had got mixed with the crowd, screamed with terror. The wail of frightened children filled the air, and angry cries were raised against the constables, some of whom were struck by stones and clods of earth.

At the same time, some fifty constables, under Superintendent Helden, reached Grosvenor Gate. There, the men were formed in a column of sections of ten, having a front of five men, and marched towards a threatening section of the mob. Instead of retiring, the people received the police defiantly and with an angry yell. The superintendent shouted to them to give way, but the warning was disregarded. Suddenly some one tripped him up. He fell and hurt his knee; and, thus provoked, the men with drawn truncheons rushed forward, and, without orders, attacked the crowd. A savage *melée* was the result. From that moment there were conflicts of a similar character throughout the Park. Reinforcements of police were hurried up, and further conflicts followed. So

grave did the situation become as the evening hours drew on that large reserves of constables were mustered at Stanhope Gate, the Triumphal Arch, the Marble Arch, and Walton Street, and in Lowndes Square.

Ere darkness fell the Humane Society's Receiving House became a temporary prison ; a riotous mob demanded the release of their friends, and there were many ugly rushes, repelled with difficulty by the police. Cabs now were sent for, and seventy persons, charged with assaults, disorderly conduct, and resisting the police, were removed, amid a storm of angry cries, to the Police stations. By nine o'clock the Park was cleared.

Thus ended the first skirmish in the campaign of the Leaguers of London against the forces of law and order.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MURDER OF DR GRADY

THE weather prophets declared that it was to be one of the driest and hottest summers on record ; and, for once, the prophets seemed in a fair way to be justified. The strain of the long, bright, rainless days began to tell upon Londoners. Two or three terrific thunderstorms shook the nerves of the feeble. Sundry earthquake shocks, though remote from these islands, imparted a sense of apprehension, and concurrently with these stern manifestations of Mother Nature, there were other hints of dread events—suggestive of a moral cataclysm, a war of classes, a volcanic outburst that would rend the bounds of social life.

In this state of disquietude, sensational revivalism moved many neurotic persons to grotesque manifestations in the name of religion. And, on the other hand, it was well known that vice was rampant in every class

of society, the eagerness of the pleasure-seekers for some new excitement, however vulgar or debasing, assuming the proportions of a mania.

“Scenes” in Parliament were of almost weekly occurrence, and signs of hysteria became manifest, even in the speech and conduct of men who held office as cabinet-ministers or as judges. Though the Government was tottering to its fall, the Opposition, torn with internal jealousies, was not in a position to take advantage of its opportunities. Difficult problems of international law had arisen, but the Attorney-General, who had for some time been suffering from a mortal disease, was practically unavailable as an adviser, while the second law officer, Sir John Westwood, was said to still be incapacitated by what eminent doctors described as complete “nervous breakdown.”

In the midst of this debilitated condition of political and social life, there was one movement which day by day seemed to gather strength and audacity. The London Emigration League still stood forward to claim attention and collect funds. White-washed, in a sense, by the verdict at the Central Criminal Court, the Leaguers of London, as they were now generally called, published appeals to the charitable, and

organised marches and demonstrations, which, without committing actual breaches of the law, made known the ever-increasing numbers of the League, and its strangely cosmopolitan membership.

It was the foreign element in the League that gave rise to special uneasiness at the Home Office and Scotland Yard. Ere long the sense of insecurity already germinating in the public mind was greatly accentuated by a startling discovery, rumoured, though not yet proved, to be connected with the Leaguers' campaign. This was nothing less than the unmasking by Detective-Inspector Henshaw of a dynamite factory, only seventeen miles from London. In all probability the discovery would never have been made but for a murder of revenge, almost unexampled in its cold and calculated deliberation, and in all respects notable in the annals of criminology. It was a story of the ruthless edict of a secret society within a society, and that society was believed to be none other than the League; it revealed, when the story became fully known, the remorseless execution of a mysterious mandate, which yet again illustrated the truth that, however subtle and well considered the plan of crime, murder, in the end, will out.

The victim of the crime was one Grady, a

doctor, who, after spending some years in New York, had come to England and acquired a fifth-rate medical practice in the purlieus of Holborn. His house and surgery were in Red Lion Street, not far from Red Lion Square. Grady was a man of ill-balanced mind, and given to intemperance. For some reason, never fully explained, he quarrelled with his friends. And, justly or unjustly, was suspected of betraying their plans to the police.

The doctor became an object of hatred and fear in the eyes of his former associates, and the inner circle—or “actives,” as they were euphoniously styled—deliberately sentenced him to death. Early in June a man passing under the name of Featherstone took a room in the house facing that in which the ill-fated doctor carried on his miserable practice. Some articles of furniture and other things, including a large packing case, were bought by Featherstone and sent to his lodgings. At about the same time Featherstone, under the name Rolf, became the tenant of a house at Rickmansworth, which was let with a builder’s yard containing sundry sheds and outbuildings. Ostensibly these premises were to be used for the purpose of manufacturing Portland cement. At the end of the garden and yard



ran the Grand Junction Canal. Close at hand was the River Colne; and in this way facilities were available to convey chalk and clay from a neighbouring estate to the "factory," and to send the cement, when manufactured, on barges to London.

Rolf, the "innocent manufacturer," who was bent on developing this useful industry, advertised for a medical man to attend his workmen in case of illness or accident, and a marked copy of the paper containing the advertisement was sent to Grady. The doctor, compelled, doubtless, by his needy circumstances, swallowed the bait, and without much delay a contract was made with him on "club terms."

The significance of this was that cement-making is not really a dangerous trade, and that there were many doctors practising nearer to Rickmansworth.

One night, a few weeks later, a man drove up in a cab, presented Rolf's card to Dr Grady, and said his services were required at the cement works for one of the workmen, who had met with an accident. Grady at once put his instruments together and drove with Rolf's representative to Baker Street. The unnamed agent then accompanied him by rail to Rickmansworth. In the darkness of the sultry night, he was conducted to his

doom. The house of which Rolf was the tenant was approached by a lonely lane on the outskirts of the little town. The two men were seen to enter by the front door, and a labourer who was approaching at no great distance declared that he heard a smothered cry, followed by heavy blows, and then a fall. His statement was not made known until some time had elapsed, as almost immediately after hearing these ominous sounds, he was knocked down and stunned by a motor-car.

Meanwhile the packing-case had been brought from Red Lion Street to Rickmansworth. The day after the crime, it was removed in a wagon. The wagon was seen again later, but in the interval the packing-case had vanished. It was found, empty, on the following day near Northwood. Grady's clothes were found in a portmanteau in a neighbouring sewer, and the portmanteau was afterwards identified as one that Featherstone — *alias* Rolf — had bought and taken to his rooms in London. Finally, the naked body of poor Grady was discovered in a backwater of the River Colne. The head of the unfortunate man showed cuts and wounds in quite a dozen different places. He had been brutally and determinedly done to death.

The police now overhauled the house at Rickmansworth, and there found other signs of an awful struggle and a cruel crime. Futile efforts had been made to paint out the blood-stains on the floor.

From the house, the examinations were extended to the sheds and workshops, and though there were signs of removal and attempted concealment, enough remained to show that the place was in truth designed for the manufacture of bombs and other murderous explosives. There were invoices, letters, and receipts imperfectly destroyed by fire, that showed the harmless "cement-maker" to be a buyer of sulphuric acid, mercury, picric acid, saltpetre, and other ingredients of explosive compositions. These and other facts the inquest brought to light, partly owing to the self-importance of a fussy coroner, who disallowed the efforts of the police to keep back certain features of the ghastly story. Meanwhile the murderers, who obviously had command of ample funds, had fled the country.

Sensational journals were not slow to unfold the tale of terror under startling headlines. Something akin to panic seized the country and coerced the Government into action. The Solicitor-General, though out of town, received earnest communications

from ministers, and it was afterwards known that he had framed some of the most drastic clauses in the Bill which was forthwith introduced in the House of Commons. This measure obtained a Parliamentary record by passing through both Houses in a single day. It provided legal machinery for the suppression of conspiracies. It was part French and part Irish in its origin, and designed in effect to prevent the illegal manufacture and possession of explosives.

The country, it was pointed out in Parliament, had been lulled into a false sense of security by the absence of dynamite outrages for a considerable time. But not so very far back, in a period of eleven years, there had been no less than sixty-nine crimes and attempted crimes by means of infernal machines, bombs, and other engines intended for the wholesale destruction of life and property. No wonder there were dark and agonised forebodings; for none could feel assured that history was not about to repeat that grim and blood-stained page in England's capital.

## CHAPTER VII

### LOVE ON THE LEAS

“THANK HEAVEN!” sighed Herrick. He tossed a bulky brief on a side-table, and rose to his feet. The heat was stifling in his narrow room in Paper Buildings. Outside in the gardens the brown grass, dry and baked, bore witness to the long-continued drought. London was becoming an inferno.

But for a week-end, at any rate, he was going to escape from it. The Westwoods were at Folkestone, and within twenty minutes the train would be carrying him seawards, to clean, pure air, to a smokeless sky—and to Aldwyth Westwood.

The boy-clerk entered with two letters. “For you, sir,” said the youth, known to his Temple intimates as “Awthur.”

“Right,” answered Herrick, thrusting them into a pocket. “Here, take my bag—look sharp! a hansom for Charing Cross.”

“Awthur” showed himself alert, and with-

in four minutes the jaded barrister was being driven westward through the thronged and sweltering Strand.

“Poor devils, *they’ve* got to stay in town,” he muttered. It struck him that the great artery of London life looked strange and sad in the afternoon glare of the summer sun; on every face was a set look of weariness and strain.

High up on Exeter Hall, a huge placard attracted his attention:

ON WEDNESDAY NEXT!!!

MEETING FOR MEN ONLY.

ADDRESS BY

FATHER FRANCIS.

Father Francis was well known to him by reputation. They had been contemporaries at Oxford, but the “Father” was then known as Lord Francis Purbrook, fifth son of the Duke of Portsdown—a wild and dissipated youth. His follies and debaucheries had been continued in the wider world, outside the University; until a strange and sudden change had come to him. He simply said that he had been converted. His old companions sneered, and asserted that he had turned “goody-goody.” But this transformation of his, call it what you will, was

obvious to all. Then he had taken Holy Orders, and now was the priest-in-charge of St Stephen's mission church—a chapel in a side street of Mayfair. His courtesy title had been wholly abandoned, and he was always spoken of as Father Francis.

With so much of the past, Herrick, like most Londoners, was well acquainted; but it was not given him to foresee the tragic scene in which the young priest was soon to play a foremost and a fatal part. Herrick, at the moment prosaically absorbed, was mainly bent on catching his train in time for a corner seat in a "smoker"; and here in a few minutes was the station, busy and bustling as ever. Here, too, was Henshaw of Scotland Yard, keenly eyeing continental arrivals from Boulogne *via* Folkestone.

"A lot of foreigners," said the barrister, as he passed him with a nod.

"And a bad lot, too," was the detective's comment. There was no time for more; late arrivals were scurrying down the platform. Herrick rushed with the rest; he found a seat; the guard's whistle and extended hand signalled the departure of the train. They were off and away, wriggling over the railroad network of London, until presently the grim and hideous streets and outskirts of the Surrey side were left behind,



The pleasant fields and woods of Kent succeeded to scenes of sordid toil, and still more sordid recreation. The murk and stew of the great town, the hoot of its motors, the hoof-hammer of its jaded horses, the dominant note of its thousands of weary feet—all were left behind.

Within three hours the westering sun had set. Eastward, lighthouses sent their first flashing rays across the heaving sea. Westward, the rose and amber of the clouds deepened into purple. The stars came out brighter and brighter in the darkening sky, thousands upon thousands, and tens of thousands—the steps of Allah's wonderful throne!

Herrick and Aldwyth Westwood paced slowly on the Leas. The influence of the magical hour had stolen upon their spirits. They spoke but little, but their hearts were full—full of the tenderness of kindred spirits in harmony with each other and in touch with the infinite. For this wonderful night seemed to reveal the infinite in all the ordered beauty of earth and sky and sea, breathing a message to poor humanity, whispering of ultimate emancipation and high destiny.

Later on, they came down, as needs must, from the stars.

Herrick, who had brought down important

papers from the Temple, asked when he could discuss them with Sir John.

To his surprise, Aldwyth showed some doubt.

“Father is not quite himself,” she said hesitatingly. “But perhaps—— Well come in and I’ll ask him.”

They walked across the grass and re-entered the hotel. The band—of violins and harps—was playing its final waltz, and the guests, who were lounging here and there, gazed with interest at the tall and comely couple. The well-knit figure and bearing of the young barrister won some approval; but the critical faculty of the lady onlookers expended itself chiefly in observing the evening dress and general style of his companion. Let no man expect that he will make any particular impression when there is a woman at his side whose costume calls for criticism, or the sincere flattery of imitation.

Aldwyth went upstairs to the suite of rooms reserved for Sir John Westwood and herself. and Herrick, waiting her message, turned into the smoking-room, where only two men were sitting, and those engaged in earnest conversation. In the light of after events Herrick often recalled much of what they said. It was an open conversation in a public room. The speakers were unknown to him. Later

on, he learnt that one was Dr Wilson Wake, a nerve specialist, to whose consulting rooms in Harley Street patients crowded. The other was a writer, whose essays in the weightier reviews had attracted much attention.

“It happened before, and it will happen again,” the doctor was saying. “It was simply a sequel to the ravages of bubonic plague.”

“You mean the Black Death of the fourteenth century?”

“That, of course, was the popular name of the disease. The Italians, in their more musical language, called it ‘*la mortalega grande*’—the Great Mortality.”

“But you surely don’t anticipate——?”

“A similar visitation?—certainly not. We were only speaking of the after effects; and similar effects might, and, in my judgment will, be produced in modern times by some less appalling form of physical disease. The *Chorea*, or Dancing Mania of the Middle Ages was the outcome of the Black Death, and the Dancing Mania itself was simply the expression of disordered nerves.”

“But, my dear sir, this is the twentieth century.”

“History always repeats itself, though with interesting variations. My dear fellow, the nervous system of the nation is out of order.”

“ You ought to know.”

“ I do,” said the specialist, drawing at his cigar.

“ But the extent of the mortality from plague was greatly exaggerated,” protested the other.

“ Of course, of course ; nevertheless, in London upwards of fifty thousand corpses were buried in layers in a single district, and we know the burial pits even to this day.”

“ And, after all, the Dancing Mania was mainly a Continental development.”

“ No doubt ; but scientifically it was only a form of epilepsy, and St Vitus has had his votaries in all countries, at all times. It was not until the sixteenth century that the faculty ventured to question the demon theories of the priests. Look up Paracelsus, my friend. His diagnosis was correct, but his remedies were ridiculous.”

“ I suppose the tarantism of Italy was only a form of the same nervous disorder ? ” queried the other.

“ Precisely ; the spider’s bite was a delusion—though, no doubt, the Apulian Tarantula was a *bona fide* insect. Hysteria can always invent a spider, or a mouse. As recently as 1787, two or three hundred girls in a Lancashire cotton mill were seized with violent convulsions, because one girl put a

mouse into the bosom of another girl. They all declared that they had been treated in the same way. The insane delusions of the Convulsionaires in France lasted till near the end of the eighteenth century, and of course we have had our own Jumpers, Shakers, and Pentecostal Dancers here in England."

"And you think we haven't seen the last of them?"

"Nor yet the worst," said the specialist, rising. "Shall we finish our cigars outside?"

As the two men ended their odd dialogue and left the room, a waiter brought Herrick a pencilled note.

*"Father will see you.—Aldwyth."*

## CHAPTER VIII

### SIR JOHN BREAKS DOWN

JOHN WESTWOOD was the son of a solicitor, and paternal influence gave him his first start at the Bar. A patient, strenuous, and able man, he missed no chance. The crest of a political wave carried him into Parliament, and, unlike most lawyers, he became a House of Commons success. Successful in love, as in forensic war and party politics, he won a wife who was wooed at the same time by a lover mad in his worship and passion, wholly different in all respects from the cold and more calculating rival, whose methods and success the rejected lover never forgot nor forgave.

Marcus White, after the episode already chronicled, took his headlong way beyond the ken of all his English associates. He was heard of as having made a huge fortune in Mexico, a country offering far more scope for a man of such drastic methods and daring enterprise. Westwood stayed at home and

plodded on. After his marriage, and when, as yet, briefs were far from plentiful, he and his wife lived in quite a quiet middle-class way at Norwood. He came to London every day, and took his meagre luncheon daily like any other grubbing barrister at a stuffy restaurant in Fleet Street. To find on his table a brief marked ten and one was quite a rare and gladdening event. In the general way prices ruled considerably lower in his chambers. But it was otherwise after he had entered Parliament. Ten years later there was a shuffling of parties, and John Westwood, who had taken silk, shot into the very bull's-eye of political life. The prophets said that he would reach the Woolsack; but, meanwhile, sundry faithful if dull members of the bar and of the party blocked the way. The Chancellor clung to life and office with a tenacity which upset all calculations. The Attorney-General, too, refused to recognise the grave complaint from which he suffered as an equivalent to notice to quit. Other Government appointments were, in omnibus language, "full up," and John Westwood, K.C., M.P., had to be content with a knighthood and the office of Solicitor-General. But his income and fees amounted to some ten thousand a year, and he was a man of thrifty habits, and saved considerably.



Yet a price has to be paid by the man who burns the candle at both ends—in Parliament and in the Law Courts. It is the kind of double life that kills all but the toughest, and Sir John was far from tough. Affairs of state were critical, and at this crisis his “sword hung rusting on the wall,” while he was urgently wanted at Westminster. He was still lingering at Folkestone when delicate problems of international law demanded all the acumen that his brain could bring to bear. The Prime Minister almost implored his assistance, but, the specialist who had come down to the Métropole to see him asserted bluntly that it would be more than his sanity, or perhaps his life, could stand if yet awhile he plunged back into the quagmire of jurisprudence or the sea of party strife.

Such was the man who paced with restless steps the room of the hotel that summer night. On the table were despatch boxes, blue books, blue draft papers, and bulky volumes that had been sent down from London. These were his tools, and he could not handle them! Aldwyth, his only child, and the one being in the world for whom his heart beat with affection, sat by the window anxiously watching him. Her love and tenderness, as she was beginning to realise, were powerless to assuage his mental suffering.

Alone, we come into the world ; alone, we tread the winepress of life ; alone, we leave it by the darkened door.

Herrick, as he entered, was painfully struck with the changed appearance of his chief. His restless movements, lined cheeks, and twitching facial muscles, told a saddening tale.

“ It’s no good,” said Sir John, after the first few words, “ I can’t work, I can’t think ; worse than all, I can’t sleep. I ought to resign.”

“ Father ! ” exclaimed Aldwyth, appealingly. Herrick was silent. What could he say ? It relieved him when, after a few moments of silence, the Solicitor-General drew a long breath and showed a greater self-command.

“ By the way,” he said suddenly, “ I’ve had a threatening letter. I don’t suppose,” he added, “ that any one need feel alarmed.” It was obvious that he regretted having said so much before his daughter.

“ The cowards ! ” she cried indignantly ; “ the cowards ! ”

“ What did you do with it ? ” asked the younger man.

“ Burnt it,” was the terse reply.

“ Wasn’t it a pity to destroy the evidence of handwriting ? ”

“ There was no handwriting ; it was typed.”

“ And no signature ? ”

“ Only a sign ; the embossed outline of a metal disc.”

“ Curious,” said Herrick.

“ But hardly a curiosity,” was Sir John’s comment. “ I understand that various members of the Government have been favoured in the same way, besides all the judges of the King’s Bench Division, and every magistrate in London.”

“ Then there’s no special threat so far as you’re concerned, father ? ” said Aldwyth, watching him uneasily.

“ Perhaps not,” said Sir John, speaking slowly, doubtfully.

“ I see you have some further information,” said Herrick.

“ Plenty of information, and nothing that would stand a moment’s test according to the laws of evidence.”

“ And yet there seems to be an attempt at wholesale intimidation. Surely the Government—the Home Secretary——”

“ The Home Secretary,” retorted Westwood angrily, “ is not the man for times like these. England is face to face with an organised conspiracy. This so-called League, which grows in numbers and power every day, is really an army of anarchy recruited from the

criminal classes at home and abroad. It seeks to paralyse the penal law of England. If the State does not crush it, it will overthrow the State. This gang of miscreants, with its weapons of terrorism and bribery——”

“Bribery !” exclaimed Herrick, astonished.

“Yes ; bribery on a colossal scale, and expended mainly in corrupting the police, by whom alone the public can be safeguarded ; and, mark you this, bribery doesn’t stop so low as that. The wire-pullers know their men—threats for some, and money for others ; a ten-pound note for a police sergeant, and so upwards on a sliding scale, until the maximum may reach to thousands.”

Herrick and Aldwyth listened with increased amazement.

“I know it ; I have proofs,” Sir John continued.

“At any rate,” interposed Herrick, “the Home Secretary has issued a circular to every local authority offering a hundred pounds’ reward to any person who makes known the illegal manufacture of explosives.”

“Useless !” said Westwood, throwing up his hands. “Police officers are excluded from the offer ; they are the only people who could give such information. After the case at Rickmansworth, even if there are traitors in the League, who is likely to seal his own

doom as Grady did? Besides, where the Home Office would pay a hundred pounds for betrayal, the men behind the metal disc would pay five hundred pounds for complicity and concealment."

"The public ought to demand the enforcement of the new Act," argued Herrick hotly.

"The public don't understand how to enforce anything; they leave the weapons of agitation in the hands of the lawless, and trust to the executive for the protection of life and property; while the executive——" He shrugged his shoulders, and for a moment stood moodily staring at the wall. "The Government hope the crisis will be averted," he resumed. "It needed the Phoenix Park murders to bring the Prevention of Crimes Act into force in Ireland. What price in horror and bloodshed will have to be paid in London before this campaign of outrage and dynamite is brought to an end, God only knows. I tell you, Herrick, that to pause or parley while these men perfect their plans is madness, and a betrayal of the nation!" He spoke with force and vehemence. For a moment his growing weakness had been shaken off. Carried away by his subject and his convictions, his voice and gestures gave some indication of the intellectual force that

such a man could bring to bear in forensic argument and in debate.

Then, suddenly, there was a swift and shocking change in Westwood's manner and appearance. His rushing thoughts and excited utterance had produced a terrible reaction. Aldwyth and Herrick were at his side in a moment. They led him to a chair. He sat there, staring, with ghastly cheeks and twitching muscles, manifestly unable to control the convulsive motions of his lower limbs, or the movement of the hands, which kept rising and falling with involuntary gesticulations. Herrick, horror-struck, recalled the conversation he had overheard in the smoking-room below.

## CHAPTER IX

### FATHER FRANCIS AT FOLKESTONE

WHEN Herrick awoke on the following morning, after a night of restlessness and troubled dreams, the summer sunshine seemed to be almost mocking in its brilliancy. For, in spite of the gladness of Nature, the times were out of joint. There was something wrong with life. With a sigh of depression, as he recalled the occurrences of the previous night, he set about facing the problems of the day—his own problems and Aldwyth Westwood's in particular.

His coat lay over the back of a chair, and two unopened letters had slipped from a pocket to the floor. They were those he had received from the alert "Awthur" in the Temple, left unopened in the hurry of his departure from town, and until now entirely forgotten. He picked them up with no great interest. He knew from the envelope what one would be about. It was a regimental



notice from the headquarters of the "Devil's Own" in Lincoln's Inn. Until lately he had been a keen volunteer officer, but the systematic snubs administered by the War Office to the citizen soldiery had greatly discouraged him and a great many others. He opened the other letter mechanically and with a morning yawn. But what he read—type-written on half a sheet of thin quarto paper—instantly fixed his attention. He stood up, stared at the words, and read them again :

*"Give up the law (if you value your skin).  
It will soon be a dangerous trade."*



There was no date. The impression, which took the place of a signature, corresponded with that produced by the familiar seals of public companies. It was in the form of a disc, and had the outline of a spider in the centre.

Was this some silly practical joke, or could it be a genuine and malignant threat? But for what Sir John Westwood had told him on the previous evening, he would have con-

cluded unhesitatingly in favour of the first theory. But now he pondered.

After a solitary breakfast in the coffee-room, and pondering still, he waited about the hotel, hoping to see Aldwyth, but she was unable to leave her father's side. When he came out on to the Leas, the Folkestone Church Parade had already begun. Here, among the crowd in the sunshine, a serious reading of the threatening letter seemed impossible.

The seaside world was decked with light as with a garment, and the butterflies of fashion fluttered their laces and laughed at the little jokes of the wearers of Panama hats as if life could hold nothing more serious than the choice of a graceful "confection," and the art of wearing it with good effect. At the west end of the Leas there was nothing suggestive of the seamy side of life, nothing to hint at the possibility of social earthquake. He wondered vaguely, as he walked eastward with hands clasped behind him, whether in olden time the good people who then looked out upon that sparkling sea had truly realised the danger, horror, and humiliation of the threatened invasion of a powerful enemy of England. It struck him that the British race, which has "worried through" so many awkward crises, obstinately cherished the conviction that, as a nation, it bore a charmed

life ; that the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune could never bring it to the proud foot of a conqueror. A dangerous faith ! For here on this very coast, much less than two hundred years ago, invasion had been imminent. The French were mustered at Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne. The Pretender's youngest son was with them, and there was an Irish Brigade to aid the enterprise. The English, too, had furnished a contingent of traitors to assist the enemy, for the Folkestone smugglers had sold themselves to act as pilots for the invading force. But for the vigilance of that tough old sailor, Admiral Vernon, invasion would have become an accomplished fact. By his order, the miserable fleet, placed at his disposal by a blundering government, patrolled the Channel unceasingly. Warning beacons blazed along the coast from Beachy Head to the South Foreland. There was one even on Hurricane House, as the sailors styled the parish church of Folkestone—the church which Herrick was passing at the very moment of recalling those far-off troubled times.

But to-day, in the old town as in the new, people knew or cared for none of these things, nor even dreamed of the possibility of any untoward events that might make Folkestone an ineligible resort for week-end trippers. On

every side 'Arry and 'Arriet rejoiced, and were glad in the glorious weather. The 'Arry collars and shoes were entirely and manifestly satisfactory to their wearers; and the blouses of 'Arriet and her sisters, cousins, and aunts, blazed violently in the dazzling sunshine. The yachting caps the maidens wore were all that unbecomingness could possibly demand, and the hats of the mothers and aunts fully exemplified that marked unsuitability for which the British female of mature years is so renowned.

Herrick, as he made his way through the cheerful and perspiring throng, decided that, as an advocate, he could make out a strong case for the survival of our ancient sumptuary laws.

Though Folkestone, west and east, already was pretty full, here were other visitors, within a stone's-throw of the shores that welcome such hosts of undesirables from foreign lands. One of the much advertised steamers of the South-Eastern line was rapidly nearing the harbour with a crowded human cargo. Of late years the Boulogne and Folkestone route had increased in favour. It was not surprising, for it made the journey between Paris and London shorter by twenty-eight miles than the Calais-Dover line.

Herrick, who knew something of the signals

adopted on these boats, was aware that each ball on the foremast represented a hundred passengers ; a ball on the mainmast vouched for another twenty ; a flag on the foremast stood for fifty passengers ; a ball at the peak over the ensign represented ten. It was plain to him that the *Queen of the South*, whose figurehead gleamed in its brand-new gilt above the dancing wavelets, was as full as the Board of Trade would allow—and perhaps a little fuller. While the steamer was being berthed, he stood upon the long platform and watched the passengers as they came ashore. The number of foreigners was quite astonishing. Swarthy, dark-haired, ill-favoured fellows, most of them, they hurried to the London train already in waiting, while there were a few whom the after-stress of what Thackeray called the “ marine malady ” drove in eager search of refreshment.

What, however, struck Herrick even more forcibly, and, indeed, with something akin to shock, was the fact that each one of those ill-favoured visitors wore upon his breast a metal disc. Yet more amazing, the disc—unless his eyes deceived him—resembled the impression on the threatening letter he had carefully placed inside his pocket-book only an hour or two ago.

While this staggering circumstance held

him wondering, the through passengers entrained; the warning whistle sounded, and they were off. A man, who had landed in leisurely fashion from the boat, stood near him, also watching the departing train. Presently he turned. Their eyes met, and in them came a look of recognition. Somewhere, Herrick felt assured, he had seen that face before—but where? The man passed him, a slight smile on his lips, and entered a well-appointed motor-car. Then, in an instant, conviction flashed on Herrick's mind. It was the face that had affected him so strangely at the Central Criminal Court, when he stood up as Counsel for the Crown in the memorable case that failed!

. . . . .  
That evening, in the ancient parish church, so beautifully restored, Aldwyth and her lover stood side by side. Sonorous and impressive, organ, choir, and congregation together voiced a hymn of faith:

“Beneath the shadow of Thy Throne  
Thy Saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is Thine Arm alone  
And our defence is sure.”

The sadness of fleeting life found deep expression towards the end:

“Time like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away ;  
They fly forgotten, as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.”

Then, with gathering strength, came again  
the cry for help and hope :

“O God, our Help in ages past,  
Our Hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.”

And all the people said “Amen.”

A rustle of expectancy, a settling movement, and, over the heads of the sitting congregation, Herrick and his companion could see the preacher. They exchanged quick glances of pleased surprise. The tall priest looking down with wistful eyes upon the many faces was Father Francis.

There were others in the church besides themselves who, in the shadowed after-time, recalled the preacher's look and words that night.

In this narrative, though Father Francis has an honoured place, only the gist of what he said need be recorded.

“*Watchman, what of the night?*” There were those, he said—having given out the text—who saw a dark night gathering over England. The growth of luxury and self-indulgence,



the follies of the rich, the miseries of the poor, the insatiable thirst for pleasure and excitement, the struggle between capital and labour, and the faltering of national faith in the eternal verities—these converging causes were shaping the materials for a great catastrophe. If righteousness exalted a nation, assuredly unrighteousness would lay it in the dust. In the book of this same prophet Isaiah it was written : “ For the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Again and again such prophecies had been fulfilled. The once mighty empires of the East, honeycombed with sensuality and corruption, had long since fallen into decay. The Roman eagle, beneath which the whole world had cowered in awe, no longer soared aloft ; Carthage had fallen ; Athens and Alexandria, and many another ancient capital of arms or learning, had lost their power and proud pre-eminence. The ruins of Nineveh lay buried beneath the sands and dust of centuries ; Babylon the mighty, with its idols of silver and gold, had been laid low. “ Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground ; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans ; for thou shalt no more be called young and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal.

Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness . . . . for thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms.”

The women of old had not differed greatly from the women of to-day, said the preacher, looking down upon the many women who listened to his words. The prophet had marked their ways; they walked with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes. They were haughty in the bravery of their tinkling ornaments, their chains and their bracelets, the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles, the wimples, and the cringing pins, the fine linen, the hoods, and the veils. Wherein, he asked, did those women of old differ in their vanity and arrogance from the women of that great modern Babylon which they all knew so well—the centre and capital of the stupendous empire on which the sun never set?

There would yet, he believed, be a further fulfilment of that stern prophecy of the eastern seer, and in that dark and terrible time what part would be played by the women of England—the women of London? They were destined to faint and fail! The luxurious, jewel-decked women of ease and fashion would be swept like rotten leaves before the storm! Only a woman such as Solomon described in the last chapter of the

Book of Proverbs could ever fulfil the high destiny of her sex, whether in times of peace or in times of trouble. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies . . . strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come, . . . she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. . . . Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. . . . Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." You and I, said Father Francis, may never meet in this church again, but in this solemn evening hour, in this still and wonderful summer night, forget not the storms which sometimes beat upon this ancient building, and remember, too, the storms of life, the terror and distress of nations. Whither shall we flee in that dread hour? There is and can ever be but one refuge—the Rock of Ages, with its calm, cool shadow in a weary land; its strength and steadfastness amid the tempestuous passions of the human race. At the last, he said, in solemn tones, pointing to the "Tree of Jesse" in the north transept of the church, all nations and peoples of the earth would be brought to see that in Him

of whom the prophets and the angels testified, and in Him alone, was hope, salvation, and tranquillity. "I am the root and offspring of Jesse, and the bright and morning Star."

For a moment the preacher paused. Suddenly, with a thrilling intonation, he repeated the question of his text—" *Watchman, what of the night?* " Then, with hand pointing eastward—an action dramatic but not theatrical—he gave the prophet's answer in triumphant tones—" *The watchman saith, The morning cometh.* "

## CHAPTER X

### MARCUS WHITE RETURNS

THE usual Monday morning movements had kept the hotel in a bustle for some little time, and Herrick's cab was waiting at the door. There was a motor-car waiting also, and one that the barrister promptly recognised. An impulse led him to return from the hotel steps to the office in the vestibule. Here a lady-clerk with frizzy hair was bending her eyes and her glasses over the visitors' register. She looked up as he asked his question: Oh yes, she knew; the car belonged to Mr Marcus White, the rich gentleman from Mexico.

Suddenly the girl turned scarlet, as she saw that some one was standing by Herrick's side. "Oh, I beg pardon," she said confusedly.

"Perhaps you are interested in motors?" The enquiry was addressed to Herrick, and the speaker was the man of the New Bailey,

the man who had landed at the harbour on the previous morning. The sarcastic intonation, the half contemptuous look, and the quiet way in which the stranger had drawn near, all served to cause embarrassment.

Herrick, angry with himself, blurted out a "Yes."

"If you would like to test the speed of mine," said White, nodding towards the hotel entrance, "I could perhaps give you an opportunity. I return to town to-night."

"Thanks, but I return this morning," answered Herrick, recovering his self-possession.

"Ah! you return to the pursuit of your interesting profession!"

"I hope yet to render some service to the cause of law and order," said Herrick, thinking of a certain letter.

"You mean to make hay while the sun shines. Perhaps you are wise."

"Plenty of sunshine at present."

"Yes; but it won't last," was the reflective retort.

"Prophecy is dangerous."

"Yes, but not so dangerous as the law."

"You mean to the clients?"

"On the contrary, I was thinking of the lawyers."

"I'm afraid I can't stop to argue that."

The younger man lifted his hat—very slightly. Marcus White raised his—with a bow and gesture of such exaggerated respect as almost to constitute an insult. He stood for a moment watching the departure of the other, then turned his gaze upon the puzzled clerk.

“Sir John Westwood is staying here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Will you send some one up with my card?”

“I am afraid——,” began the girl.

“You will be good enough to send up this card.”

She took the card nervously, but mustered courage for another effort to withstand this masterful man. “Sir John Westwood is ill, sir.”

“We are old—acquaintances.”

“I’m afraid he can’t see you.”

“I shall be waiting here for an answer.”

He strolled slowly through the vestibule, with a calm but patient air, which seemed to imply that to him it was the most natural assumption in the world that his behests should be complied with.

Five minutes later Marcus White was ushered into a handsome room on the first floor, and at the same time Aldwyth entered by another doorway. The manifest and immediate effect produced in him by her appear-



ance bewildered her. The dark-skinned face of the visitor paled, his eyes narrowed, and gazing at her face intently, he grasped the back of a chair as if for support. They stood and gazed in silence. Then, mastering his emotion, White spoke, as if by way of explanation :

“It was some resemblance,” he said ; “I was hardly prepared, and it startled me.”

“You mean a resemblance to my father ?”

“No, to your mother.”

“You knew my mother ?” She looked at him, wonderingly.

There was something in his face and bearing which made her look and look again. Lately she had been reading the life-history of Balzac, and fragmentary accounts of his appearance, and also of that of Armand de Montriveau—in whom the great romancist reproduced some of his own characteristics—came swiftly to her mind, as she watched the face of Marcus White. “He seemed to have reached some crisis in his life, but all took place within his own breast, and he confided nothing to the world without. . . . He was of medium height, broad in the chest, and muscular as a lion. When he walked, his carriage, his step, his least gesture, bespoke a consciousness of power which was imposing ; there was something even despotic about it.”

Then, again, another passage: "The black hair, shining and radiant, receding from the temple in bright waves . . . the eyes steeped in a golden penumbra with tawny eyeballs . . . send out a glance of astonishing acuteness."

"You knew my mother?" she repeated quietly.

The question was not answered. White had turned his eyes towards the window and seemed to be gazing at a distant sail.

"Of course you expected to see my father," Aldwyth began, after an awkward pause. "I am sorry it is impossible. But if there is anything that I can tell him——"

He turned his eyes upon her swiftly. "Miss Westwood, there are some things that must be discussed between men alone."

"My father is ill. So, unfortunately——"

"Is he really ill?"

"I don't understand you," she said stiffly.

"I beg your pardon, but, as I daresay you know, there are such things as legal fictions, political fictions, illnesses of expediency."

"Is it on political business that you are here?"

"In a sense, yes."

"The doctor has given the most positive orders that my father is to have complete rest from every sort of worry and anxiety."

“Desirable, but impossible. Then he does not know that I am here ? ”

“No,” coldly.

“I should say that there is only one way in which your father can make sure of carrying out the doctor’s orders.” She looked at him with gathering resentment, but he continued calmly : “He would do well to throw up the appointment he holds under the Crown”—she listened, amazed ; but she was obliged to listen—“and resign his seat in Parliament.”

Her face flushed angrily.

“He must also abandon his profession.”

“Must !” she repeated, indignantly and wonderingly.

“I can assure you I am giving you excellent advice.”

“We are not asking for advice.”

“There are reasons which lead me to volunteer it.”

“My father has been threatened by some cowardly writer of anonymous letters,” she said impulsively, “but the police will soon stop that.”

His smile checked her. “Ah, the police,” he said quietly. “But of course Sir John Westwood is not afraid ? ”

There was an implication in his words, a subtle intonation, that stung her to the quick.

She moved across the room with outstretched hand, to touch the bell.

“One moment,” he interposed.

“My time is not my own to-day,” said Aldwyth.

“You think me brutal and presumptuous?”

“Extremely presumptuous.”

“It is necessary for Sir John Westwood to be warned. He shall have a fair chance.”

“What you say is quite unaccountable to me,” she answered, and looked at him again. It flashed upon her that only madness could be the explanation of this extraordinary conversation. And yet the man was manifestly calm and resolute.

“As to the time of warning him——” he continued.

“Of what?”

“Of the necessity for doing what I have suggested. As to the time of telling Sir John Westwood what I have said this morning, something may be left to your discretion.”

“You are very kind!” with scornful emphasis.

“I don’t claim to be kind, but I am candid, and I think that when, at your discretion, you tell your father of this interview, he will see the futility of hurling himself against the rocks.”

“What rocks?” she demanded.

“He will discover in due time, if he does not know already.”

She rang the bell, and walked towards the window.

“I am sorry,” she heard him add. There was a short pause. “I am sorry for *you*.”

She turned her head, with an angry retort upon her lips; but the door was closing, and she found herself alone.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SIGN OF THE SPIDER

THE London season languished. Even the cult of the great god Pleasure found few genuinely zealous votaries. Trade, said the managers of the big West-end drapery establishments, had never been so bad. Manifestly there was something radically wrong when crowds of women-folk no longer blocked the pavement in front of Simon Robertson's great plate-glass windows. The king lay ill at Windsor Castle, and such social functions as might ordinarily have counted on the presence of royalty roused but little interest. Arid, parching days, and sultry, suffocating nights, made ball-rooms and places of entertainment almost unendurable. The booking-offices of the theatres told a convincing tale of bad business, and the art of advertisement in manifold forms, so well understood by stars of the stage and actor-managers (and so zealously promoted by the writers of

dramatic gossip in the papers) took forms which suggested the desperation of despair. In the world of music it was just the same. People yawned or sighed wearily when their eyes met the puff preliminary concerning the latest freak in musical precocity. Even the emotional women who usually worshipped as near as might be the bushy-haired violinists exploited by concert agencies, fanned themselves languidly and stayed at home. In the city there was but little difference in the look of things. Men appeared to be busy, but their seeming energy was largely due to the mere habit of hurry, acquired through the influence of surroundings. Every morning, as usual, the swarm of stockbrokers, dealers, and hangers-on of the House, came bustling out of the stations at Liverpool Street, Broad Street, and Cannon Street. Between nine-thirty and ten-thirty the accustomed crowds might be seen hurrying over London Bridge. But when the brokers reached the Stock Exchange there was next to nothing to do. American rails refused to lend themselves to any sort of manipulated excitement, and in the mining market, shares were thrown about at rubbish prices, or could not be made to change hands at all. The financial journals still came out, but their advertisement pages lacked those big announcements of new



issues from which their profits were mainly derived. They eked out a precarious existence by publishing carefully edited reports of company meetings at so much per column, supplying copies at special rates for transmission to confiding shareholders. The daily columns of market prices became shorter and shorter, for, in such times, the smaller companies could not pay to have their dead or dying stock quoted as if it still possessed the elements of vital movement.

Of course, the galvanic efforts of the "great dailies" still continued; but the latest attempt of the *Times* to introduce a new and important series of instructive works on almost give-away terms into the homes of the public (including a beautiful bookcase in fumed oak) met with practically no response at all.

But the papers, with editorial finger on the pulse of London, now took up a theme to which increasing space was devoted day by day. The leading journal showed that it still knew how to thunder. Its latest warnings, its most booming utterances, were directed against the growing power and audacity of the Leaguers of London. It told the nation plainly what had been hinted at before in the *Detector*—in effect, that there was a great conspiracy on foot, and that

unless the Governmental powers bestirred themselves, the safety of the capital, if not of the whole nation, would be imperilled.

This conspiracy, it was stated, had ramifications and objects far more dangerous than those that had been exposed in the famous series of articles on "Parnellism and Crime."

Tudor Street and Carmelite Buildings were not to be outdone by Printing House Square or Fleet Street. The League figured constantly in the bold headlines and contents bills of the halfpenny journals, and one of them—the *Epoch*—whose prosperity was not so great as was commonly supposed, bent on a bid for fame, now boldly alleged that the head centre of the mysterious League was none other than the Anglo-Mexican millionaire, Marcus White. The result was looked for with anxiety and interest. When it was known, the devout believers in the disinterestedness of the *Epoch* received something of a shock; for one morning it was announced that the paper had changed hands, and the journal which so recently had denounced the Leaguers of London and all their works, was now the accredited organ of the League, and the champion of its objects. There was something sinister and cynical in the transaction.

The price paid for the *Epoch*, its goodwill,

its plant, its printing houses and stock, was said to be enormous, but in its sale as a commercial property the commercial instinct was by no means eliminated. It became at once a powerful collecting agency for the League. A coupon-form, with the imprint of the spider-disc, appeared in every copy, and it was intimated that those readers who subscribed a stated sum to the funds of the League, would have their names and addresses carefully registered, thereby securing immunity from further applications for financial support. In effect, such subscribers would obtain the protection of the League itself, in case of public disturbance, or that risk to life and property which, according to the contemporaries of the *Epoch*, the police of London were not in sufficient strength to avert.

Coupons, with names and addresses, and remittances often largely exceeding the minimum amount invited, now poured into the offices of the *Epoch* by every post. The receipt sent in every case was a metal disc, which now met the eye of astonished Londoners in every street, railway carriage, omnibus, tram-car, and place of public resort. It was worn prominently on the left breast by an ever-increasing multitude, men and women, and even by children, belonging to all ranks of life.

Lists of the disc-holders were published in batches in the *Epoch* from day to day, and were read with extraordinary and ever-growing eagerness. In vain the *Times* and other sober journals denounced the folly and danger which these ever-lengthening lists exemplified.

It was of no use to declare that people of high character and good position, were blindly, even madly, allying themselves with the scum of London and the off-scourings of the Continent; that their action would infallibly paralyse their only reliable protectors, and promote the cause of social disruption by giving the League the semblance of respectability. There was nothing to show, said the leader-writer, that this so-called Emigration League took any practical steps to give effect to its ostensible programme. On the contrary, there was ample evidence that it organised immigration of anarchists and miscreants of all sorts into England. Never before had the foreign element been so much in evidence in London. The tardy and much vaunted legislation against the influx of aliens had proved little better than a fiasco. Foreigners still swarmed to Grimsby, Hull, Newhaven, Southampton, and Harwich, though ineffectual steps were taken to check the influx at those ports; while no similar machinery

had been fairly tried at Dover and at Folkestone. Aliens were everywhere, not only on English ground, but also on British ships. In vessels belonging to the port of Cardiff alone, the crews were foreigners in the proportion of fifty per cent. Thus the mercantile marine, which should be the great feeder of the Royal Navy—our first line of defence against Continental enemies—was become an actual source of danger, instead of strength, to the nation.

But warnings fell on deaf or indifferent ears. Personal safety had become the dominant idea. Panic was in the air, and the purchase, for such in truth it was, of the little metal disc, was now widely regarded as the only means of securing a magnet by which the alarmed population could hope to steer clear of the vortex towards which the tides of life were tending.

The *Daily Telephone*, in desperation, started a correspondence under the title: ARE WE AFRAID? Letters from all sorts and conditions of people descended like a postal avalanche upon the editorial offices; and while the selected correspondence was published from day to day, a series of special articles dealt with *Crazes of the Past*—Law and his Mississippi Scheme; Blunt and the South Sea Bubble; the Jabez Balfour fiasco;

the Whitaker Wright boom, with many other examples of chicanery, folly, and consequent disaster, receiving elaborate notice. The moral was illustrated, the application was solemnly rubbed in; but all to little purpose. The sale of the metal disc still increased by leaps and bounds. Inborn inclination to abbreviate asserted itself, in accordance with abundant precedent, and one person would ask another: "Are you a Spider?" and the answer would be, "Yes," "No," or "I mean to be." Thus the League, though having, it was believed, many inner circles or subdivisions, became sectionised into two great classes—the Leaguers proper (or improper) unemployed, unemployable, and hosts of discharged prisoners; and those others—the respectable "spiders," holders of the metal disc as a species of insurance against the terrorism and depredation which were expected from the original Leaguers.

What, precisely, the "Spider" meant was the subject of much controversy. But what purported to be an explanation was given in one of the leading articles in the *Standard*; a totally different theory being put forward with equal prominence in the *Daily Chronicle*, in an article headed, "The Mystery of the Metal Disc." At about the same time, in the *Morning Post*, the pen of a well-known

author and journalist, whose versatile talents were constantly employed in surveying the world from St Andrews to the Antipodes, airily instructed the public concerning the Real Significance of the "Spider." The writer, being of that nation which an English writer has declared "unspeakable," naturally enough commenced with an allusion to the famous spider of a famous king of Scotland. He pointed out, however, that that particular spider was not of Scottish origin, because the insect really appeared to Robert Bruce in the little island of Rathlin, which is off the coast of Ireland. The writer then went on to treat of the spider at Sans Souci, which fell into the cup of chocolate prepared for Frederick the Great, whose life it was instrumental in saving. From Sans Souci he passed lightly to Mecca, and told of the spider that spun the web that hid Mahomet from his enemies. From that to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury was only a step, and the theory of poison made from spiders' bodies was aptly illustrated by a quotation from the *Winter's Tale*. More pertinent, perhaps, was the reference to the old wives' fable, which held that certain physical ills might be averted by wearing a spider in a nutshell round the neck. Finally, the versatile contributor raked in the legend connected with



the "Shambles" shoal off Portland, at the bottom of which, according to tradition, are the wrecks of many ships seized and dragged down in far-off times by the giant spider, Kraken.

"Below the thunders of the upper deep ;  
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth."

There to remain—

"Until the latter fire shall heat the deep ;  
Then once by man and angels to be seen,  
In roaring he shall rise, and on the surface die."

Such articles, perhaps, were calculated to spread, rather than restrict the general feeling of uneasiness. They served to fix the public mind upon what was already sufficiently in evidence, and by suggesting elements of the uncanny and occult, promoted the hysteric tendencies which were becoming so distressingly conspicuous among the people.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE " EPOCH " RUNS AMOK

IN those never-forgettable summer weeks in the mammoth city the converted *Epoch* published a series of denunciatory articles without parallel in the history of the modern press. The *Epoch* was now an organ of opinion, indeed, but not of opinion made to order, or governed by the exigencies of political party. Its independence was a fact, and not a polite fiction. It dealt with men as men and as members of specialised professions. It ranked politics as one of the professions, and not the most honourable, and it tarred the " ins " and the " outs " with one and the same prickly brush. The new departure made it clear that the freedom of the press, as hitherto understood, was itself a mere fiction.

In law the newspaper had no greater freedom than the individual critic. Political opponents might, indeed, be attacked and

misrepresented with an impunity begotten of necessity, and the pot-and-kettle system, inherited from the journalistic organs of Eatanswill; but beyond that, the only freedom consisted in the right to publish what a jury of twelve tradesmen might not consider libellous. Journalism, in fact, was analogous to advocacy. The pot called the kettle black, and the kettle declared that the pot was blacker. Both pot and kettle, meanwhile, had an eye to business. That was perfectly legitimate and natural, but the radical mistake of the public lay in its view of the press as a philanthropic institution bent only on maintaining the cause of peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety throughout the realm. It was obvious to the reflective worldling that no journal could be run on truly ethical lines with ultimate advantage to the bank balance of its proprietors; just as it was plain to the world-fearing Christian that practical Christianity would never "pay." No journalist or Christian admitted these facts. They knew them quite well, but they ignored them, and placidly drew around themselves the comfortable robes of organised hypocrisy.

The very last thing that any well-conducted journal would have dreamed of would be the printing of a slashing and remorseless attack

upon the great Middle Class—the backbone of the country and the mainstay of modern journalism. Censures of the “smart set,” foolishly so called, and of their social descendants, of course had been administered *ad nauseam*, thereby giving to a limited body of showy persons (with more money—or credit—than brains) an exaggerated sense of their own interest and importance. The lower orders, too, had met with stern rebuke (for their thriftlessness, their laziness, and their self-indulgence) but only in journals which the lower orders never read. The *Epoch*, however, assailed with tooth and nail the denizens of the great middle country, the buffer state in which dwelt all the respectables—the clergy, the doctors, the lawyers, brokers, dentists, accountants, surveyors, merchants, shopkeepers, active and retired, who “made England what it was,” and what the *Epoch* roundly declared it ought not to be.

As a journalistic programme this was considered part and parcel of the midsummer madness that had fallen on the distracted capital. Fleet Street, Printing House Square, Bouverie Street, Shoe Lane, and Whitefriars, as embodied in the persons of representative journalists, shook their heads. “It was playing the fool”; it was “not cricket”; it was “quarrelling with the your bread-and-butter,”

or killing the goose that laid the golden—or at least the gilded—eggs ; it was “ the reckless destruction of a splendid commercial property ”—in short, such bad “ biz,” that no editor would pursue it unless under orders to ride deliberately for a fall. In particular, to assail the Church ! the Law !! the Medical Faculty !!! in one fell charge ! Midsummer madness, indeed ! To fall foul, not merely of one learned profession—especially when the *Epoch* might have gone for one of them (the clergy for choice), and with impunity ; but to attack all three was—well it was pure, absolute, and undiluted lunacy. Thus quoth Fleet Street. But the onslaught continued. From the archbishops down to the deacons, none was spared.

It was admitted that there were good and true soldiers in the clerical ranks—some such pitiful minority of righteous men as those for whose sake Abraham, in his prayerful and pathetic apology, entreated that the Cities of the Plain might be spared. But for the rest ? —the time-serving right reverends on the path of promotion, with one foot in the sanctuary and the other in the temple of Mammon ; the deans and archdeacons who clung to high benefice, and forgot the solemn ordination vows of their early manhood ; the canons whose intellectual vanity found vent

in sermons and pamphlets that argued faith in the cardinal doctrines of Christianity to be only a delusion and a snare; the holders of rich livings who had waxed fat and kicked against all the labours of parochial duty; the popular preachers who did not practise what they preached; the faithless stewards of the mysteries who declared there were no mysteries at all; and the flaccid curates who feebly bleated in the pulpit to a congregation of martyrs in the pews—for these, and all of these, the *Epoch* let loose the chastisement of journalistic whips and scorpions.

Somewhat less sweeping was the treatment dealt out to the profession of the healing art; but here, too, condemnation was not spared. The claptrap of the calling was its blight; the "abracadabra" of its Latin prescriptions; the bestowal of long names on short ailments; the fetich of the medicine bottle; the hoodwinking of the patient's friends; the solemn-faced acquiescence in the patient's mendacious explanations of his or her symptoms; the decorous delusions indirectly fostered in the best "bedside manner"; the pandering to the egoism and self-importance of opulent "sufferers"; the frequent farce of "second opinions"; the puff paragraphs countenanced by eminent practitioners in relation to their visits to eminent patients; the etiquette that

supported the "lumping" of fees, and the continuation of "professional services" long after such services had ceased to be necessary: these, perhaps, were but the stereotyped faults which unthinking men regard as justified by custom or their own necessities. The rank and file of the medical brotherhood, the *Epoch* admitted, had much work and scanty wage. But the sins of their leading men were more heinous. The selfishness which made them contend for the retention of great hospitals in unsuitable localities; the enormous fees exacted from private patients on the strength of hospital reputation; the too ready use of the operating knife on the human subject, and the tortures of vivisection inflicted in the abused name of science upon the dumb creation: these, indeed, were sins that cried aloud for reproof and repression.

But the *Epoch* was more scathing still in its bombardment of the system of judicature, and the legal ministers thereof. It began with the House of Lords as a legal tribunal—"the gilded asylum in which judicial patients suffering from the incurable disease of old age delivered very occasional judgments in exchange for princely salaries and exalted rank." The Royal Courts of Justice were characterised as a gigantic honeycomb in



which clerkly drones got as much as they could for doing as little as possible ; a mighty mill in which the machinery stood still during vacations which lasted about a third of the working year ; a vast temple in which the servers were ever engaged in piling fuel on the altars of precedent and practice.

Then the writer, or writers, went on to deal with the legal practitioners, whom he or they described as "Locusts of the Law" ; but here, again, there was no condemnation for the honest rank and file—the barristers in their chambers and the solicitors in their offices, who were fair and square in their dealings, and manfully struggled to keep their footing under almost impossible conditions. But for the brilliant leaders of the Bar—the advocates who walked in silk attire and siller had to spare—there was no gentleness. "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites !" For them, said the *Epoch*, the whole pretentious fabric of our legal system was maintained ; for their advantage the monstrous delusion of honorary services ; for their immunity the supposed dissociation of forensic labour from forensic fees ; and the helpless position of suitors whose causes they mismanaged or neglected.

Contempt was poured on the "representative bodies" which misrepresented the for-

ensic profession—the General Council of the Bar, with its policy of tithe, mint, and cumin, and its neglect of the weightier matters of the law; the Benchers, with their limpet-like clinging to ancient funds and obsolete traditions; the circuit messes, with their petty jealousies and selfish trade-unionism.

But here, in the middle-class multitude, if anywhere, lay the true strength and stay of the nation. With all their faults, these men were mainly of the right sort. But they were selfish, supine, indifferent, save to their own immediate comfort and advantage. In politics they were swayed by purely party cries, or else not moved at all. In municipal affairs they allowed themselves to be swamped by noisy social democrats; in religion, if not actually hostile to the Church, they maintained a cautious “non-committal” attitude. They placidly acquiesced in government by permanent secretaries—men of clerkly mind, the clustering, clinging barnacles on the great ship of State. But when conscription was talked of—when the idea of devoting a few years to military training, and, in some dire emergency, their lives, if need be, to the service of king and mother-country—they held up their hands in pious horror at the bare thought of anything so “un-English,”—and so very inconvenient!

Thus may be very briefly summarised the outspoken and unflinching attacks on bodies of men and institutions which it had always been considered right to pat on the back, and on the leading members thereof, (to whom, as they already had much, it was servilely considered that more should be given). It certainly was manifest that the *Epoch* writers had been given a free hand, and had used it, with *magna est veritas* for their war-cry. Naturally, protests, remonstrances, denials, poured in from the attacked ; for to few is it given to see ourselves as others see us.

Yet, after all, it was but a twentieth century echo ; a rough and trenchant postscript to a certain sermon preached long, long ago on a Syrian mountain-side to listening multitudes who were astonished at the Preacher's doctrines.

Whether this stirring of the dry bones would ultimately make for greater righteousness time alone could show. Dark are the workings of destiny ; and in the path of reform immediate results can rarely be recorded. Undoubtedly the proximate outcome of the *Epoch* campaign was a strengthening of the cause of the malcontents. The numbers of the Leaguers still grew and grew. They had, in fact, become an army on half pay ; for every Leaguer, unemployed and unemploy-

able, drew something from the coffers of the organisation, and thus the body of Adullamites drew in every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented. In effect, the rate-payers of London, who were for buying peace at any price, had provided their enemy with the sinews of war, and thereby hastened the approaching climax.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STRANGE OUTBREAK AT QUEEN'S HALL

THE recrudescence of the Dancing Mania first took notable form on a certain Sunday evening. At Queen's Hall the Sunday League—which is in no way to be associated with the Leaguers of London—had organised one of those frequent and excellent concerts which, presumably, are intended to provide a suitable substitute for religious worship in our churches. A famous conductor, whose brilliant services to the cause of the higher music had brought him a world-wide reputation, was there to sway with his bâton the finest orchestral band ever known to the music-lovers of London.

The great hall and the vast galleries were densely packed, and as the programme proceeded, the heat, generated by hundreds upon hundreds of listening humans, became intense and overpowering. There was a marked sense of overstrain during the wonder-

ful rendering of Tchaikovsky's lengthy Symphony (No. 6 in B minor). The music itself was full of subtle emotion. Deep melancholy alternated with swelling excitement. The passionate pessimism of the Russian character communicated itself through the medium of the score to those among the great audience who were predisposed to share it. The tragic gloom and fatalism of the movement hung like a thunder-cloud in the stifling atmosphere, and the wailing sadness of the subdued finale was succeeded by a tense silence. Then, as the audience was about to burst into the accustomed applause, a woman rose in the body of the hall, and gave a piercing shriek. The effect was electrical. Hundreds of people started to their feet. Another shriek, still more weird and piercing, drew a like response from scores of throats. In an instant confusion reigned throughout the hall and corridors, and in the balconies. Attempts to restore silence and order were drowned in the general tumult. Here and there, men and women, unable to reach the aisles, tried to climb over the closely ranged lines of movable stalls. Many of these seats fell with a crash, and horrified spectators in the balconies saw masses of people heaped and struggling on the ground. The bandsmen had risen excitedly, instruments in hand,

unheeding for once the gestures of the conductor, who turned with pallid face, the perspiration in great drops on his forehead, and made imploring gestures to the audience. Bruised and bleeding, distraught with terror, some of those who had fallen in the effort to escape struggled to their feet and fought viciously and desperately to reach the exit doors.

The officials of the Sunday League, with many persons in the audience, now made great and partially successful efforts to prevent a general rush. Shouts of "Sit down! sit down!" came from all parts of the building. The bandsmen were the first to resume their seats, and while the outgoing crowd was checked and marshalled into some sort of order, others set a good example, and, realising that there was absolutely no reason for panic, settled down as if intending to remain throughout the programme. But by a wise discretion on the part of the conductor, the concert was abandoned. At a signal, the familiar first bar of the National Anthem brought all to their feet again; then, turning to the audience, the wielder of the bâton invited them to join; and, with extraordinary volume and fervour, "God Save the King" brought the concert to a close. A terrible catastrophe had been averted; for, by



marvellous good fortune, no life was lost in the frantic effort of a section of the audience to escape. Those who were injured were being hurried, half-fainting, into cabs, and those who were merely suffering from shattered nerves sat on chairs in the corridors, while anxious friends tried to restore them to some degree of self-control.

The swift reaction, born of unexpected safety, may perhaps account in some measure for what followed. The woman whose scream had given the first impulse to disturbance—afterwards recognised as a Spanish dancer at the Empire music-hall—was suddenly seen to be moving down the corridor in a wild, fantastic dance. Bursts of laughter greeted the extraordinary and unlooked-for display. An avenue was made for her, and on she danced. Her hat was gone; her long black hair had fallen to her waist, and her eyes were blazing with the look of a demoniac. The crowd closed after her, with fresh laughter, which presently gave place to excited and wondering exclamations. Now she was in the entrance hall, and one of the officials laid his hand upon her shoulder. She shook herself free with a scream of foreign words. Another moment, and those peering eagerly from the entrance steps and pavement, saw the Bacchantic figure whirling in the street.

The cries and tumultuous shouts which arose among the crowd around the dancer, and the warning shouts of the drivers of approaching vehicles, brought hosts of visitors to the open windows of the Langham and the neighbouring houses. Presently, those who could look down from these vantage points, and others who now packed the steps of All Souls' Church, saw with bewilderment that the magnetism of example had drawn some six or seven young girls and women into a kind of dance which imitated the movements of the Spaniard.

Thus the glare of the electric lights revealed one of the strangest and most lamentable scenes ever witnessed in the streets of London. It was brief, but pregnant with painful possibilities. Two or three policemen, as soon as they realised in some measure what was happening, assisted by some resolute men who had now emerged from the hall, brought the dancers to a forcible standstill. Their resistance was cat-like, savage; but exhaustion aided the efforts of the constables, and within twenty minutes the roadway was cleared, the crowd dispersed, and Langham Place had almost resumed its normal aspect.

For ten days after these occurrences there was nothing to indicate that they were likely to be repeated. Then, in another quarter of London, there was a somewhat similar

outbreak, and, unhappily, on a more extensive scale. It took place among the girl-pupils attending a large school of shorthand in Southampton Row. Rumour had it, and probably it was true, that some of them had been present at Queen's Hall on the occasion already chronicled. After the long, hot afternoon hours in the class-rooms, the shorthand pupils—girls and youths—poured out in the usual throng into the streets. There was a good deal of gossiping, as usual, and here and there a little innocent flirtation. The flower-sellers, who drive their trade near Cosmo Place on the pavement of Southampton Row, as usual eagerly drew attention to their baskets. Then one, whose basket was first emptied, executed a wild pirouette of triumph. Some of the young men applauded vigorously. Here and there a girl was pushed forward, and some of the more reckless danced a few steps, in imitation of the flower-seller. The spark was in the bonfire! and before any one realised what was happening, a score of dancers, male and female, filled the pavement, and by force of numbers moved into the roadway. To escape the horse traffic and motors, they whirled across at an angle into Russell Square. The cabmen on the stand applauded them derisively, bursting into coarse guffaws. Incoherent cries came

from the parched throats of the dancers. Some of them now joined hands and swept over the broad southern roadway of the square; others, with grotesque gestures, danced alone, leaping into the air at intervals. A cornet-player, who was standing near the north corner of Bedford Place, raised his instrument to his lips, and the clear, sudden notes that followed seemed to act upon his hearers as a trumpet-call. It served to quicken to an almost appalling degree the epidemic character of the amazing outbreak; for passers-by, moved as by an irresistible impulse, joined in the maddened movement of the dancers. They overflowed into the quiet thoroughfare of Bedford Place. From the residential hotels and boarding-houses on either side people rushed to the doorways and windows. Servants, with shrill cries, hurried up area steps to witness, with loud comment, the stupefying display, until many of the watchers themselves were drawn into the widening circles of the excited dancers.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BILLY OF MAYFAIR

THERE was one, and only one, section of society in London that found unalloyed pleasure in the abnormal features of the period. The youth of the lower orders revelled in the absence of the restraint that hitherto had qualified the natural joy of life. The Boy in the Street in all his varied experiences had never had so good a time before. He made the most of it. He came, not as a single spy, but in battalions. His shrill voice rent the air day and night; his cockney smartness found new and glorious opportunities for exercise; the badinage of the pavement was heard on every side. The march of the Leaguers, or the whirling rush of a band of Dancers, never failed to stir him to loud delight or tumultuous excitement.

There was one small youth, here entering the pages of this chronicle, who participated with the keenest relish in the unfolding drama

of the day. This boy was Billy of Mayfair. Not always had he found his headquarters in that highly rented and exclusive district. Like the Wise Men, and like many clever boys, he came from the East. But his travels westward began at an extremely early age, and in regard to the migrations of that period Billy's mind was quite a blank. His grandmother, a woman of no importance, and given, when means permitted, to inebriety, sometimes mentioned Poplar as the place of his nativity, and on other occasions asserted that in the Isle of Dogs Billy's pink eyes first opened on the murky world down East. There was not much difference, and nothing to choose between those grimy regions, and Billy himself never troubled his white-thatched head about the past. He was in the West Central district when first he realised that he was anywhere, and he accepted his surroundings just as he accepted his physical peculiarities. Billy was quite accustomed to the special, if unflattering, notice which his appearance attracted, and showed no surprise or resentment when addressed contemptuously as a "blooming Halbino."

If a skin specialist had explained to him that his abnormal skin and hair resulted from an absence of the minute particles of colouring matter usually found in the lowest layer of

the epidermis, he would have listened respectfully and then departed with the skimming step and whooping yell familiar to his young companions of the gutter. But nobody explained him to himself, and it was an accepted, and not perhaps unwelcome, fact that he was not like other boys.

When Billy reached the age of ten he was still residing in a "third floor back" in an unsavoury court of which the narrow entrance is in Chapel Street, a short thoroughfare running from Lamb's Conduit Street to Milman Street. But Billy was not much at home; nor was Billy's grandmother aforesaid,—a prematurely aged and doddering person who earned precarious pence by perfunctorily sweeping crossings in an adjacent square. At night the two shared the shelter of the third floor back, and breathed till morning light, or darkness, the poisonous air of the miserable apartment. In warm fine weather Billy kept late hours. Sometimes, like the people who were "seeing life"—Heaven save the mark!—the boy did not go home till morning. Billy, like many another gutter child in London, knew much of its night side—the side known to the policemen, to hansom-cabmen, and to hospital nurses on night duty, who look out of window when cabs rattle up to certain



neighbouring houses. Editors and journalists know also of that night side, but all things are not for publication. Half the world is ignorant of the deadly canker eating into the vitals of the nation ; and the other half keeps silence.

It was through being out late at night that Billy lost his leg. It fell out thus : Billy, dead tired, was sleeping in a doorway at the top of Bedford Row, when the vigilant eye of P.C. Dormer espied his small and huddled form. The law, through the eyes of the constabulary, looks with sternness on such lapses from well-ordered life and habits. The open-air treatment must not be adopted on your own responsibility. If you have no home—well, you ought to have. You may walk the king's highway, but if that grows fatiguing and you slumber on a doorstep, it is the plain duty of P.C. Dormer to rouse and move you on. In effect, to be homeless is to be criminal, and to wander abroad without any visible means of subsistence, brings man or boy within the purview of the law. Lucky for you if P.C. Dormer does not see reason to conclude that incidentally you are loitering with intent to commit a felony.

So Billy was shaken, and slumbered again ; he did not rise, but the policeman's temper did. So the grip of a mighty hand came

upon Billy's bony little shoulder, making him call out sharply and then whimper.

"Get out o' this," growled the constable. So Billy got out, into Theobald's Road. There, at what he believed to be a safe distance, he found another lurking-place, and having had a fatiguing day in the streets, he fell asleep again. But the law was on his trail. P.C. Dormer's bull's-eye, searching nooks and doorways, discovered once again the insignificant rebel against social order. Dormer was greatly ruffled. At the corner of Gray's Inn Road, half an hour earlier, he had encountered a band of hooligans, who, strong in numbers, had jeered at his authority. In such circumstances it was but police nature that he should take it out of somebody. And here was Billy, defying or ignoring the majesty of the law! With a howl of pain and terror the boy came out of his dreams to find himself once more in the grip of a superior force. He wriggled to the pavement and lay there sobbing. Then P.C. Dormer gave him a vicious kick and Billy screamed with agony. It was no good now to tell him to be off. To "move on" was a physical impossibility. He lay and writhed.

The next day he was in hospital in Great Ormond Street. He was supposed to have been knocked down by a fire engine in a

hurry. Billy knew better, but he held his peace. His bibulous grandmother told the matron that "there'd always been summat wrong with his 'ip." There was something very wrong now; and presently they transferred the injured child to the Alexandra Hospital in Queen Square, where hip disease was a speciality. Surgeons came and went, and now and then there were operation days at intervals. There came a day when the operating knife was brought to bear on Billy, and when it had done its necessary work, Billy's right leg was his no more, and for a time he had that weird experience of feeling pain in a member that was non-existent.

Sister, staff-nurse, day nurses and night nurses—they were all kind and tender to the little one-legged patient. They assured him he would be all right now, and that he was going to have a beautiful little crutch to get along with presently. His grandmother came to see him on visitors' days, blear-eyed and pendulous of lip. On those days, indeed, many impossible parents and guardians went up the stone stairs of the Alexandra, bringing cheap and noisy toys, and refreshments of a wholly inappropriate character. With the general throng came on one occasion a stalwart man who walked like a policeman. He was a policeman. It was P.C. Dormer. He was a

good fellow in the main, and he had children of his own. At first Billy did not recognise him out of uniform. Then remembrance dawned, and to his amazement his quick pink eyes noted tears in the eyes of P.C. Dormer. Clumsily, ashamedly, the constable put a painted toy upon the bed, and Billy smiled. Then the big man, with hasty glance around, bent his great red face over him.

“ You ’aven’t split, ’ave you ? ” he asked in a hoarse whisper.

“ Not me,” said Billy, speaking very low, but very scornfully.

“ My Gawd ! but you’re a good plucked ’un ! ” said P.C. Dormer. “ I’m damned sorry, that I am.” His great fist closed upon the small boy’s tiny hand. It was the proudest, happiest moment Billy had ever known.

Sometimes, though the Alexandra was devoted to the hip-diseases of children, other diseases found an entry ; and one day, Billy, who had shown disquieting symptoms, found himself, as the nurses said “ in isolation.” In other words, he was placed in a detached ward, approached by a short bridge, under the care of a nurse specially told off to watch and tend him, and perchance to catch the same disease herself. The word went round that it was “ dip.” And “ dip ” it was. When the doctor was sure of that,

Billy was treated with anti-toxin for diphtheria, and the telephone was quickly set to work. An ambulance came round—a beautiful carriage, the nurse in charge explained; and Billy—nurses nodding and smiling at a distance, with eyes that had a tearful, frightened look—was borne down the staircase and so away to Hampstead. There, in the “dip” ward of the Fever Hospital, he fought the fight with death—the students in their quaint garb looking on; and, to the surprise of all, came out victorious.

Seven weeks later he was discharged, and back again in the three-pair back. There was the old grandmother, doddering still, the same, yet not the same. One grey morning, when Billy awoke, something in her appearance startled him. The poor old thing was dead; and so unsightly and alarming in his eyes that straightway he arose and fled, hopping and tapping with his crutch along the grey, deserted streets—anywhere, anywhere away from that awesome sight.

How the boy lived, or starved, throughout the next few days he never realised. When at length he mustered courage to return, all that remained of “this our sister” was there no longer. The parish authorities were accustomed to these cases. The room was swept and garnished after a fashion. Already

other tenants were in possession, and Billy was admonished to go about his business. Having no business, he hopped vaguely into the streets again. He had a horror now of walls and rooms. Over there in the Alexandra he had had his experiences, and outside the National, on the opposite side of the square, in the night, he had sometimes heard blood-curdling screams from epileptic patients. He shuddered—shook, as it were, the dust from his remaining foot, and hopped off towards the unexplored regions of the west.

Along Great Russell Street he made his way, gazing at the grim mass of the great museum, and wondering if it were another hospital or a prison. There were pigeons and policemen inside the formidable railings. The former attracted; but the latter repelled. So he turned his back on the mighty storehouse of antiquities, caring and knowing nothing about the forty-three miles of the bookshelves, and all the cheerless wonders of its different sections. Onward he hopped, across Tottenham Court Road into Oxford Street. The district pleased him. Presently the waving of big boughs attracted notice, and exploration led him into Grosvenor Square. Further investigation resulted in the discovery of Berkeley Square, and finally, very weary and hungry, he sat down to rest on

the doorstep of Sir John Westwood's house in Hill Street.

From that day forth the boy became and remained Billy of Mayfair; destined to play his little part in national events.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SHRINE OF LUXURY AND PRIDE

THUS the wind of the world, which bloweth whither it listeth—or whither the Great Spirit that rules the world directs—had wafted Billy, a fortuitous atom of humanity, into touch with Aldwyth Westwood and Father Francis of St Stephen's. Billy, however, fought shy of Father Francis, who had speedily run across him. The boy was not very keen on the clergy; being rather disposed to class them with the police—and that, indeed, in a moral sense is what they are, or ought to be. But with Aldwyth, who discovered him one early morning on the doorstep, he speedily developed friendly relations. He soon learnt to look up to her with reverently admiring eyes, as a beautiful being belonging to another sphere; one who smiled with an enchanting smile, and bestowed sixpences as other people bestowed halfpence.

Not that the boy lived wholly on charity.

Sometimes he invested his little capital in a stock of newspapers, and persistently thrust that luminous organ, the *Planet*, under the notice of the wayfarer. But there was not much sale for the *Planet* in Mayfair. The truth is, that Billy never realised the greatness of his surroundings, and the Birth and Wealth of other residents in that favoured district of the peerage and the plutocracy; nor would any one know the importance of Mayfair merely from personal observation. The *cliché* of locality is not a matter of instinct, but of manufacture. In Mount Street, close at hand, a good deal of the manufacturing was done by the eminent firms of auctioneers and estate agents, the bank-like qualities of whose establishments appealed to the rich and the refined. Plate-glass windows, burnished mahogany, polished brass—plenty of brass—soft carpets, and delightful chairs, allured the seekers after mansions in town or country. Not here did vulgar posters in thick and sticky ink offend the eye. Bills of all sorts, including the little bills for commission and miscellaneous services, were kept out of sight. Beautifully executed photographs of desirable properties for gentlemen of position were to be seen in these handsome offices, and expensively got-up Particulars and Conditions of Sale were freely issued

through the medium of the post. They could let you a cramped little dwelling in Mayfair for as low a rent as £450 a year, but, of course, for a really commodious residence, a much higher figure was demanded.

It was a much higher rent that Sir John Westwood paid for his house in Hill Street. Long past and gone were the days of suburban residence. The rising man, like the man who is born on the heights, must have the right address. It was good enough for the once obscure barrister to journey daily from Norwood Junction, reminded *ad nauseam* by the railway porters of the interesting regions of Anerley, Penge, Brockley, and New Cross. But a law adviser of the Crown, a parliamentarian battling for a foremost footing, must live in the right quarter. Mayfair is the place for the mighty, just as Harley Street—the valley of the shadow—is the place for the eminent doctor. The specialist knows that the people who come to him will measure his value less by his treatment than by the locality in which he writes his prescriptions. Such is the wisdom of the world.

So Aldwyth Westwood had the satisfaction of feeling that round and about her resided, when in town, the fine flower of British rank and fashion. But rank and fashion as yet showed no eagerness to embrace her with

effusion. Her friends were few ; perhaps the best of them was plain Molly Barter, the nursery governess of her early days, who had stayed on indefinitely as quasi-companion, needlewoman, and general factotum of the house. Miss Barter was a person of the happiest disposition ; calm and unimagina- tive, untroubled by the problems of life ; sound, not to say solid, in her views of things in general ; unvarying in appetite and modes of expression, and devoted to Aldwyth with a sort of dog-like fidelity.

Miss Barter did not understand Aldwyth. There were many things she did not even try to understand. She had never read Voltaire ; but to her it seemed, even in those troubled months, that nearly everything was for the best, in the best of all possible worlds. That was by no means the opinion of Aldwyth Westwood. None the less, she found comfort in the mental altitude of the faithful Molly, who feared neither ghosts nor mice, and remained quite unmoved in the presence of a blackbeetle. Miss Barter, through Aldwyth, also made the acquaintance of Billy. To her it seemed not unreasonable that he should be homeless and ragged. Sometimes she asked him, with slight signs of severity, what he had done with his cap, and Billy had to explain that “ the chaps ”—meaning other

boys, two legged and aggressive—had deprived him of that article. The same thing happened whenever a new cap or an old was given to Billy; the “chaps” seemed to think that a “blooming little Halbino” ought to show the colour of his hair. So Billy’s cap was “chucked” over a wall, or down an area, and there was an end of it.

Another friend of his—one Joe, a stableman at the mews in Hill Street—told him that it wasn’t respectable to go capless in those parts. But what could a boy do, much as he would have liked to give satisfaction to the stableman, for Joe was good to him.

On chilly nights he sometimes allowed the small vagrant to hop into a coach-house or harness-room, and sleep like a little lord in warmth and comfort. In return, Billy allowed Joe to scan the racing tips and learn the latest odds without investing in the purchase of a *Planet*. The coachmen and footmen of the locality were much more haughty. Men of their position knew what was due to it, and had no sympathy with intrusive ragamuffins from the far East. The Mayfair flunkey still lived up to the lofty traditions of “Jeames de la Pluche of Buckley Square”:

“He vel became his hagwillets,  
He cocked his ’at with *such* an hair;

His calves and viskers *was* such pets,  
That hall loved Jeames of Buckley Square."

While as to the butlers, they, indeed, were dignitaries to be viewed and revered from a distance. Once, in his inexperience, Billy volunteered to assist a Hill Street butler, who brought forth his bicycle to place on a four-wheeler. The man swore at him. But as Joe, who saw the episode, observed to Billy, "It warn't no good to expect anything from that sort. A chap like that never did a day's work in his (sanguinary) life. He was too d——d artful." With which, Joe, bare-armed and hot, resumed his "hissing," and vigorously cleaned down his "hoss."

There were a great many little tips to be picked up in Mayfair during the early summer months following Billy's coming to the district. He arrived after the first demonstration of the Leaguers in Hyde Park, and therefore missed the Sunday visit of the mob to the Westwoods' house in Hill Street. But after that there was such a stampede from the big houses, that the ubiquitous cab-tout, especially the toat who wore a "spider," reaped quite a harvest thereabouts. He took care, however, that so weak a competitor as the crippled boy should keep his distance. So Billy, to some extent unintentionally, developed a means of raising money in which



no tout could rival him. The pace at which he learnt to hop along was quite amazing ; but, not content with that, he took to making high leaps in the air, coming down upon his foot and crutch for the most part without disaster. Then he essayed to dance a little on one leg, after the manner of Donato, a one-legged man who, once upon a time, drew all London to Drury Lane to see him in a pantomime.

The passers-by, seeing these perilous displays of agility, paused with horror, and then produced a coin. One day, outside a mansion on the east side of Berkeley Square, a thin pale-faced gentleman, with a worried look, stared aghast for a moment while the unconscious Billy was rehearsing. And when the worried man passed into the house, the young acrobat found a shilling, actually a silver shilling, in his hand. He asked who the gentleman was, and Joe informed him that he was none other than the most noble the Marquis of Downland. No wonder he was worried ; for, apart from the domestic agitation of the capital, the pulse of other capitals had to be felt through the medium of the wires in Downland House. All the inner workings of the Chancelleries of Europe were known within those walls ; all the devious devices of diplomacy ; all the international collisions avoided



by a hair's breadth ; all the movements of foreign fleets ; all the ambitions of foreign potentates and the disposal of continental armies. For the Marquis was Minister for Foreign Affairs, and they gave him sleepless nights. To Downland House came ambassadors and envoys at critical junctures in the lives of States. They came after the great naval battle of the Dogger Bank, in which a powerful fleet of trawlers, armed with fishing nets, was utterly routed by a Russian Squadron ; they came again, but less conspicuously, when a German Squadron paid a surprise visit to Tangier. And there were many conferences there when certain Powers proposed to close the Baltic Sea to British men-of-war.

When the Foreign Secretary suffered from nightmare, it generally took the form of a thing with wings. It was a creature which sought to imitate the Apostle Peter by walking on the sea—a web-footed, oceanic bird, with a rudimentary hinder toe, and the upper mandible very strongly hooked. This restless bird liked to visit every sea, skimming the surface and gobbling the small fishes, crustaceans, molluscs, and the rest of them. It always came in view in stormy weather. When the Foreign Secretary awoke from these bad dreams, he never felt quite sure

whether the bird were a gigantic stormy petrel or the German Emperor.

But of course his lordship did know that, in the Kaiser's view, "the twentieth century belonged to Germany," and that his Majesty also considered Britannia had ruled the waves too long. Wherefore, Hoch! and again, Hoch! for the rights of the Vaterland. How glorious an achievement—as foretold by the German romance-writer—to drive the British Squadrons from the North Sea; to disembark without difficulty sixty thousand German warriors at Leith; to march southward, while accommodating French allies landed another army at Hastings and closed in on London; to dictate terms of peace at Hampton Court; and then to enter London with all the pomp and circumstance of war—imperial victor—not merely William the Second, but William the Second Conqueror of England. Hoch! and again, Hoch! and Hoch! once more.

A dream? the baseless fabric of a vision? Probably; but the German navy was a stern reality; they were very busy over there at Kiel, Heligoland, and elsewhere, and realities must be reckoned with. The shipwrights' hammers resounded persistently in the German dockyards, and the clangour crossed the sea.

So Lord Downland had a good deal to think of in Berkeley Square, as well as at the Foreign Office; though, even so, he little dreamed of what the Royal Petrel would be about before the year was out.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MANIA THAT LAID HOLD OF LONDON

WHEN London became fully alive to the weird occurrences in its midst, the first feeling was one of contempt, but it was quickly followed by the dawn of consternation. An article in the *Lancet*, widely quoted by the lay newspapers, dealt gravely with the problems that the revival of the Dancing Mania presented. It foreshadowed possible developments in terms which led husbands to look at their wives, and fathers at their daughters, with an uneasy feeling that they, too, might become victims of what the *Lancet* described in technical terms as chorea, and in popular language, as a form of St Vitus's dance. Like lawyers searching for precedents, the pressmen of the day delved diligently for the history of the Dancing Plague. The best contribution on the subject was contained in an anonymous article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*. The writer pointed out

that these convulsionary manifestations were more or less prevalent during a period of quite two hundred years, dating from the end of the fourteenth century, and that, human nature being the same in all ages, there was nothing inconceivable, or even improbable, in a revival of such distressing symptoms in modern times. The difference would be in treatment rather than in the disorder itself. In former times chorea was regarded as curable only by those—the priests—who had the cure of souls. People who were hurried body and soul into the magic circle of hellish superstition needed to be rescued by supernatural agencies. The screaming, foaming men and women who in the Middle Ages swept with wild gyrations through the towns of Germany and the Netherlands, therefore, were made the subject of priestly exorcisms. They were forcibly dragged to the shrines of St John or St Vitus, where, by means of masses and religious ceremonies, the evil spirits were believed to be cast out. In regard to St Vitus in particular, the priests invented a legend that the holy youth had prayed to be protected from the Dancing Mania, and lo! an answer from heaven—“Vitus, thy prayer is accepted.” Thus, for all time, had the martyred St. Vitus become patron saint of all who were afflicted with

chorea, just as St Martin of Tours was the patron of all who suffered from small-pox.

It was not until the sixteenth century, the writer said, that the physicians had made any attempt to take the dire disease scientifically in hand. One thing was absolutely certain—the deep-seated inclination of morbidly imaginative persons to imitate the afflictions of others. In the language of the *British Medical Journal*, “Such attacks themselves were, as in all nervous complaints, the almost necessary crises of an inward morbid condition which was transferred from the sensorium to the nerves of motion.”

On the medical aspect of the modern outbreak it is unnecessary to dwell. Two significant circumstances, however, may be noticed. Ample authority was given for the statement that in the Middle Ages the Dancing Plague had always been most prevalent in the month of June; and, secondly, had wrought its greatest ravages among shoemakers, tailors, and others who led a confined or sedentary life. Thus it came about that those Londoners who were under no compulsion to remain in town, reading these articles, developed the greatest urgency in leaving it. Ere mid-summer day had passed, scenes at the great railway stations became quite amazing. Piles of luggage blocked the platforms, bribes to

secure seats were offered freely to the railway men, and though enormous exertions were made to cope with the outgoing traffic, the congestion became almost unmanageable. The scenes enacted at Victoria, Waterloo, and London Bridge in particular were such as had not been known in the whole history of English railways.

The haste and extent of these departures involved incomplete arrangements for the protection of vast numbers of London houses and of the property that they contained. Burglaries, and even daylight robberies became frequent and daring. It was observed that the victims of these impudent thieves were mostly those whose names were not in the lists of subscribing members of the League ; and, whether justly or unjustly, most of the burglaries and robberies with violence chronicled in the daily press were connected with the operations of that much-feared and ever-increasing association.

In such circumstances it was inevitable that much abuse should be showered on the police. But, as a body, the Metropolitan force remained loyal and zealous. The same must in justice be said of the City police, on whom depended the safety of the enormous wealth garnered in the vaults and strong-rooms of the City banks and warehouses.



But the police at each end of the town now had to reckon with unprecedented problems. The Leaguers were far too numerous to be suppressed, even if a hesitating Government had given the mandate—which, it seemed, they dared not do. Moreover, it was found practically impossible to secure convictions or even to complete prosecutions. The magistrates and judges were prepared to do their duty, but witnesses were afraid to come forward, and jurymen who could not manage to get medical certificates to excuse their absence, nevertheless stayed away from the criminal courts, and submitted, as a choice of evils, to the payment of heavy fines. Throughout the long and blazing summer days, bands of Leaguers marched through the streets, ringing at doors or hoisting collecting boxes on long poles to the first-floor windows. Shops were invaded in like manner. At the hotels and clubs defence corps were organised, but so menacing was the aspect of the wearers of the metal disc that in most instances peace had to be bought rather than insisted on. Then suddenly the cry would be raised, “The Dancers are coming; the Dancers: the Dancers!” The sound of bagpipes, drums, or of accordions, blended with the hum of many voices and the rush of feet, and bands of girls and men swept into view, dishevelled,

heated, but whirling with fantastic steps through street and square, dancing and dancing still, while some in the climax of delirium sank in exhaustion to the ground.

The places of those who fell out of the Dancers' ranks were constantly filled with new recruits. Many bystanders, who began by watching and wondering, felt themselves drawn into the repulsive vortex. Women, more especially, were thus allured. Girls came rushing from behind shop-counters. The doors of private houses were suddenly thrown open, and in spite of the efforts to prevent them, unhappy women fought their way into the street to be absorbed in a moment in the ever-moving circles of the maddened Dancers. It was noticed that there were certain instruments and certain types of music which developed the tendency to join in and exaggerate these deplorable public exhibitions. Night was rendered hideous by the noise that filled the streets. Indeed, during the short hours of darkness, the quiet stars looked down on many a sight that well might make the angels weep. London was become in a more painful sense than ever a City of Dreadful Night. The Dancing Mania had got a strengthening grip upon its people. At one time it seemed only too likely that it would become an epidemic

of appalling extent and characteristics throughout the kingdom.

Regarded thoughtfully, there were many causes that tended to bring about such an outbreak of hysteria in that exceptionally hot and rainless summer, (bringing as it did a dearth of water for domestic use and street cleansing). The state of things was summed up thus by an able German writer: "Imitation—compassion—sympathy—these are imperfect designations for a common bond of union among human beings—for an instinct which connects individuals with the general body, which embraces with equal force reason and folly, good and evil, and diminishes the praise of virtue as well as the criminality of vice. . . . Far be it from us to attempt to awaken all the various tones of this chord, whose vibrations reveal the profound secrets which lie hid in the inmost recesses of the soul."

But, assuredly, it was to this mysterious instinct of imitation that one must look for explanation of that loss of will power, of which, in that distressing time, so many Londoners were either examples or witnesses. The first morbid condition produced was that of a bird fascinated by a serpent, and the outcome was surrender to the violent excitement of the Dancing Plague. There was

another feature of the times, more or less connected with the administration of justice, that began to cause dismay. The police found it practically impossible to enforce the provisions of the Licensing Acts. Riotous scenes occurred when attempts were made to close the public-houses at statutory hours. Customers, amongst whom the disc-holders figured prominently, refused to go. They demanded more drink, and they got it. Isolated examples of this lawlessness could have been put down, but it was so general that enforced obedience became as impossible as the vindication of criminal justice in the law courts.

Only when the stage of exhaustion or helpless intoxication had been reached, did the foul-mouthed and turbulent customers of the publicans come forth into the streets.

Often they fought and screamed in the grey sadness of the dawning day; some staggered off in search of home or resting-place; others rolled in the gutters, and where they rolled they lay, while frightened faces peered from the upper windows of the neighbouring houses, and startled children in their cots broke into cries of misery and terror.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GREAT FIRE IN HYDE PARK

GREATLY moved by the evil things that had befallen London, and stung in some measure by the trenchant attacks appearing in the *Epoch*, a small band of London clergy who had recognised in this grave crisis a challenge to the Church, set themselves earnestly to alleviate the growing sufferings of their people. Among the most active and unconventional of this little band was Father Francis. His church—St Stephen's—was the first that was made available for the definite purpose of checking the spread of the Dancing Mania by special prayer and meditation. The unhappy subjects of this repellent affliction were invited to seek the calm of the sacred buildings, and find in the contemplation of the sanctuary rest for their perturbed spirits, peace from the contagious excitement of the stifling streets. Strange scenes were sometimes witnessed in these churches—frequented

as they came to be not merely by those who, already, had been drawn into the whirlpool of the mania, and vehemently desired to be preserved from a relapse, but thronged also by girls and women who, though hitherto unaffected, felt and feared they, too, could not long escape.

Outside, in the glare of day or in the shadow of night, tumultuous sounds would reach the ears of priests and suppliants. Nearer and nearer came the clangour of crude instruments of music ; broken cries and bursts of hysterical laughter filled the outer air ; the scuffling of the Dancers' feet became more and more audible. Perhaps the direful medley came and passed without any of the Dancers entering the church. At other times they crowded in with loud discordant noises. But almost always these were soon subdued by the solemn stillness of the building, and the unmoved calm of kneeling men and women, already earnestly engaged in intercessory prayer. No set services were attempted after the first few experiments. It was found that sermons or addresses often stimulated feelings already over-excited, and that hymns produced uncontrollable emotion. But the church organs were put to constant use when it was discovered that music, especially music of a certain type, was marvellously potent in

stilling the overwrought nerves of the Dancers and allaying the tendency to hysterical outbreaks.

This remarkable result of musical sounds recalled to many the recorded effects of the Italian tarantellas in counteracting the effect of poisonous spider-bites. Not only so, but it was whispered by the more credulous that spider-bites actually were the cause of the mania in its modern form, and that in this connection, the spider symbol of the Leaguers possessed a special and malignant meaning. That there were numerous instances of self-deception and of fraud was beyond all question. That, indeed, is a common experience among hysterical persons, and in this instance, as already intimated, the Dancers were largely recruited from classes predisposed to excitement and delusion—factory girls from the East End, workers in close, unhealthy surroundings, and great numbers who belonged to the painted sisterhood of the streets. Practically it was a form of insanity, and now for the first time the curative effect of music in the treatment of mental disease received something like systematic application. Music, of certain kinds, it was certain, excited to exhibition of the mania; music at the same time provided for many the virtue of an antidote. Unfortunately, though these com-



bined influences of religion and melody were so well employed for the benefit of large numbers, there were still greater numbers untouched by any sort of remedy, whose wild paroxysms were constantly drawing new adherents into the ranks of the Dancers. Any attempt at forcible suppression only resulted in displays of increased violence. Practically the evil had grown in a few weeks to such a head that the authorities had to stand by in the hope that it would wear itself away. Already the police were vastly overweighted by the task of maintaining any semblance of public order. There were hosts of designing men and women who aided and abetted the grotesque excesses of the Dancers for no other purpose than to take advantage of opportunities for conduct violating every principle of public decorum.

Thus the fateful summer wore away. The railway termini presented conditions more chaotic than ever. All outgoing trains were densely packed by Londoners fleeing with their families from the multiplying terrors of the capital. But though scores of thousands escaped, millions necessarily remained — the helpless puppets of time and circumstance.

When at length the August Bank holiday came round, the disorganised condition of the railway service led to the abandonment of

any adequate provision for the usual excursion traffic; as a consequence, vast crowds, that in the ordinary course would have got away from London, were practically kept prisoners within its bounds. The reek of the wood and asphalt of the streets, the glare of the pavements, and the pitiless rays of the relentless sun, drove them in herds into the public parks. There, under the parched foliage of the trees, some measure of shelter could be had, and on the brown and dusty grass holiday keepers—Heaven save the mark!—threw themselves down in weariness and sullen discontent, while hosts of women and children, indifferent to the feeble remonstrances of the frightened park-keepers, paddled in the dwindling waters of the Serpentine, the Round Pond, and the ornamental lakes. As the long and joyless day drew to its close, news came to Scotland Yard that mobs had forced their way into the private gardens of the large squares. It proved to be true as regards Berkeley Square, Grosvenor Square, Belgrave Square, Tavistock Square, and many others. Temple Gardens and Gray's Inn Gardens also had been invaded, but urgent messages for police protection were only met with the answer that it was impossible to spare the number of men required for such a purpose. In Grosvenor Square, indeed, a body of police did manage to clear

the gardens of a gang of turbulent intruders, after a violent resistance. To repeat the expulsion in a score of other squares was quite impracticable. It was an hour of alarm that brought home to peaceable citizens the conviction, long dawning, that a combined force of Metropolitan and City police, which did not exceed 17,000 men—and could provide only about 5000 for duty every eight hours—was absolutely inadequate to safeguard London day and night in times of exceptional disorder.

The mob in various quarters had scored a triumph. By the simple expedient of forcing a lock or clambering over some low railings it had gained possession of many acres of fresh country. Well-mown grass and carefully cultivated flower-beds were at their service. Noisy revellers shouted indecencies in the growing shades of evening. Unwashen and verminous creatures in rags and tatters sprawled on the garden seats and prowled amongst the shrubs.

In the parks fresh contingents arrived, and jeered at the orders to clear out at closing time. Under the trees they drank and shouted in the gathering darkness. Here and there bits of candles and matches were lighted, and ribald laughter and drunken yells burst forth at the sights the flickering flames revealed.

Rumour of what was going on brought many persons to the Park, and among them Herrick. Quite suddenly he ran up against Henshaw the detective.

“Nice game, isn’t it?” said the latter. “This sort of thing’s going on all over the place. I’ve just come down from Kensington Gardens, and, if anything, it’s worse there than it is here.”

“Well, here comes a breath of air,” sighed Herrick, baring his head to the faint puff that rustled the leaves.

“Yes, and from the south-west, too. It’ll do us good if it brings the rain at last.”

They sauntered on—they were on the south side of the Serpentine—listening and looking. Presently they reached a widened space.

“Hullo! do you see that?” exclaimed the detective, halting.

“See it? Yes! What does it mean?”

“Fire!”

“A house?”

“No, a tree. It must be in Kensington Gardens. That’s what comes of this match and candle business. If I’d had my way the troops should have hunted the whole pack of them out of this an hour ago.”

“Look! look!” cried Herrick excitedly. Westward a tongue of flame had shot into the air, and then another, and another.

“ My God ! ” said Herrick, horrified. Then he set off at a run, the other keeping at his heels. On every side recumbent forms were scrambling to their feet. Oaths, obscene jests and blasphemous shouts broke upon their ears, and far and near sounded the shrill persistent whistles of the constables. A lurid light now illumined the western sky, and here and there ahead of them great cones of flame shot up, while huge columns of smoke bent and spread before the rising gusts of wind.

The two men paused, exhausted for the moment, letting the rush of dim and stumbling figures eddy round them.

“ Kensington Palace must be on fire,” panted Herrick.

“ If so the League’s at the bottom of this business,” said the detective. “ Hullo ! you there——”

Away to the left in a bed of flowering shrubs his quick eye had caught a stealthy movement. Almost as the words escaped him there was a little flame low down near the ground. It revealed a glimpse of a white, hot face, glistening with perspiration. The cheeks were inflated, the mouth was blowing at a little heap of straw, dried chips, and leaves.

“ You devil ! ” shouted Henshaw ; “ that’s

your game?" He dashed into the bushes, but the incendiary was too quick for him. He wriggled clear on the other side and was lost to view in the wild on-rushing crowd.

When they reached the road dividing the Park from Kensington Gardens, it was seen that the refreshment chalet just within the rails of the gardens was burning fiercely. In the midst of the crackling of the furnace could be heard crash after crash of crockery, as the piled cups and saucers, plates and jugs, came tumbling from their charred and splintering shelves.

In the glare that lit up the broad roadway, a maddened, half-intoxicated mob of Dancers, breaking out into screams and maniacal laughter, circled in full view of the burning chalet, until the galloping horses of the fire-engines, approaching from the north, drove them, still leaping and gyrating, southward towards Kensington. Fire engines now approached from every quarter, but it was obvious that little could be done to save the trees. Every thirsty bush served as a conductor for the greedy element. The furnace spread from bough to bough; below, the fire fastened on fragments and twigs lying on the parched surface of the grass, curling its way snake-like to the nearest trunk; then, with a sharp hiss, climbed to the lower branches,

licking them eagerly until, with one united and terrific hiss, the brown and shrivelled foliage combined to make a pyramid of fire. Tree after tree became thus outlined in a mighty burst of flame, then lapsed into smoke and blackness, still revealed here and there with glowing branches. Sometimes the fire commenced its work high in the loftier foliage; for now the upper air was filled with charred and glowing embers borne north and eastward by the rising wind. In the rush of sparks and smoke above the swaying tree-tops, it seemed as if the weird Valkyrie sisters rode triumphant. Bushes and branches were hastily torn down where possible, and bands of people made frantic efforts to beat out the fire ere it obtained an unconquerable hold.

But deviltry was loose that night, and, however the first fire may have been occasioned, the distances at which new outbreaks were discovered pointed conclusively to deliberate acts. In all, seven men were seized—taken red-handed in the act of causing separate fires. Four of the prisoners wore the symbol of the League.

Towards morning, a heavy downpour of rain extinguished the last sparks of the conflagration. It had come too late to save the trees, and all that the fire brigade had been able to achieve was the preservation of



Kensington Palace from more than partial destruction.

Dawn crept, frowning, over the dreary scene, the black ghost of its former beauty—a wilderness of ashes; above which the charred branches of denuded trees waved mournful arms to greet the mournful day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ALDWYTH ASKS A QUESTION

LESS than thirty miles from the monster city, now festering and malodorous under the September sun, high in a breeze-swept garden, Aldwyth Westwood, with a book upon her knees, sat gazing at the fleecy clouds. Slowly they sailed across the sky, casting deep shadows on the fields and woods. Anon the darkened tracts of country again were bathed in brilliant sunshine, and, far as the eye could reach, the face of Nature smiled.

“Sunshine and shadow—in Nature and in life,” she thought. A sigh succeeded—a sigh that sprang like tears “from the depth of some divine despair,” a girl’s tribute to the burden and the mystery

“Of all this unintelligible world.”

Here, if anywhere, near the summit of Leith Hill, was a refuge from the outward stress of life, a place of peace and quiet breathing. Sir John had benefited greatly

from the pure air and calm of the retreat. The high gardens were a glory, and the house—bought ready furnished from a wealthy man's executors—contained a well-stocked library, in which the jaded refugee from Parliament and Law Courts renewed with some zest the varied reading of his earlier years.

Westwood was fifty-four—an age when, if a man allows himself to think at all, the length of life's journey and its destination are thoughts that recur to him with deepening gravity. Behind him—the years that the locust had eaten; before him—what? Great numbers of men still feel young and vigorous at fifty-four, and much later, but the fact remains that it is the wrong side of the fifty. To some, but to few, celebrity, success, promotion, may come later; but if so, it lacks the heart-flush of early triumph; in some indefinable way the prize, so long fought for and looked forward to, proves something less than solid gold. Rewards tardily won savour of a short lease—an annuity bought late in life, an eleemosynary provision.

At fifty-four the artist's finest picture has been hung; the author's best book has been published; the great surgeon has performed his greatest operation; the great advocate has scored the most brilliant of his forensic

victories ; the engineer has built his biggest bridge ; the parliamentarian, sick and savage with hope deferred, then sees the biggest prize of all eluding him, or, if it comes at last, it is bestowed hesitatingly, not because of what he is and can accomplish, but of what he was, and tried to do, when at the zenith of his powers.

Westwood had been wonderfully successful, as success is reckoned by the man in the street ; but success is only relative. You have got something, but it sharpens the appetite for the "little more," and so the chase continues.

The prospect of a judgeship offered him few attractions ; *that* meant finality on five thousand a year. His aims were higher, but politically and professionally his position was complex. The parliamentary situation, and the state of parties and sub-parties, made further progress, even if his health permitted it, quite impossible for the time being. He was alive to that, and conscious oftentimes that probably he had already secured the best that life was likely to offer him.

What were his spoils ? Abundance of this world's goods, the envy of hosts of less successful men, and the affection——? He paused at that ; affection of whom ? It was not a pleasant thought that there were only

two beings in the whole world genuinely attached to him; an old and faithful servant, a woman whose fidelity withstood the outbursts of his petulance, and his daughter. Aldwyth was fond of him—yes, he was sure of that. But there was a lurking feeling that she would have been fonder still if he had only given her a chance. His cold reserve had kept her at a needless distance. He had denied her nothing that she asked for, but he had volunteered little for which she had not asked. He had shown no real concern in her interests or pursuits. Yet he had reason to know hers was a warm, impulsive nature like her mother's, quick to believe and love, swift to be rebuffed and chilled. The possibilities of closer intimacy were now remote. Young Herrick, as was natural, would have the first place in her thoughts. Presently she would marry, and he, the envied and successful man, would be—alone.

Of that strange interview with Marcus White, Aldwyth had told her father nothing. The condition of his health forbade it at the time; but now that the mysterious nervous attack which had caused her so much alarm seemed to have been wholly shaken off; now that his step was firm and his colour healthier, her mind was exercised as to her duty.

Westwood, at his table, looked up as his

daughter, with reflective face, walked past the open window of the library.

“Deep in thought?” he said, inquiringly.

She stopped, and returned a pace or two.

“I was wondering where we should go when we leave here,” she answered.

“Back to town,” her father replied, with raised eyebrows; “but of course it won’t be until the third week of October.”

“The House won’t be sitting then, will it?”

“No, but the judges will.”

“Father,” she said impulsively, “need you go back to the Bar?”

“I need not, but I shall,” he answered rather coldly. “Why do you ask?”

“Is it—is it wise?” she stammered.

“Wise!” he exclaimed, amazed.

“Why need you do it?”

“In the first place, I shall have to prosecute those scoundrelly incendiaries, who have already gone for trial.”

“But, surely, that will be dangerous?”

“For whom?”

“For you, father; you know that you were threatened.”

“Threatened men live long,” he answered, with a lightness that perhaps was a little strained. “You surely would not have me neglect an obvious duty because some unknown blackguard sends me an empty threat?”

“The threat may not be empty. At Folkestone you told us others had been threatened, that there was a real conspiracy, and if so——”

“If so, one must do one’s duty all the same. My health was broken down at Folkestone. I was not myself. Why, my dear girl, if I kept out of this case they would end by calling me a coward. I should be virtually driven into private life.” There was a pause.

“Perhaps there is something I ought to tell you,” she said slowly.

“Well, what is it?”

“When we were at Folkestone, and you were ill, some one came to see you.”

“Go on, go on”—impatiently.

“His name was Marcus White.”

Westwood made no comment, but his face grew paler.

“What he said was a sort of warning. I was to tell you when I pleased—that you had better give up everything—Parliament, the Bar,—father, what does it mean?” She advanced swiftly to the broad table on the other side of which he sat, his eyes bent upon the blotting pad and balancing a paper knife between his fingers. “Won’t you tell me what it means?” she repeated, entreatingly.

“It only means that this man is an old enemy of mine, and, it seems, one who does not forgive or forget.”



“But is there any reason—any ground? If you never wronged him in any way—father, say you never did!”

“No, I never did”—the words were somewhat laboured. “But I married your mother, Aldwyth. That was the cause of quarrel.”

“Ah!” she exclaimed; “he spoke of her. Were they to have been married, if you——”

“Something of the kind,” he answered, rising, then turning to the window. “It was many years ago; we need not talk of it.”

“But he has not forgotten.”

“No, it seems he has not forgotten.”

“What shall you do?”

“I think there is nothing to be done.” He sat again, and drummed on the table with his fingers.

“Do you believe this man would really harm you if he could?”

“You saw him. You can judge as well as I,” he said, evasively.

“He must be mad.”

“Mad with the long-nourished passion of hate, mad with the long-cherished desire for revenge—mad in that sense, yes.”

“Then God help you, father,” said Aldwyth solemnly.

“Yes, God help me,” and he buried his face in his hands.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LORD MAYOR READS THE RIOT ACT

THE Long Vacation having dragged its monotonous length to a finish, the Courts re-opened in the third week in October. The day was dull, and dull foreboding seemed to oppress the Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and all the other haunts of law. Fewer people, and less cheerful than of yore, mustered in the Great Hall to witness the customary procession of the judges. The Lord Chief Justice bore himself with dignity, but wore the marks of feeble health. The other judges were ordinary, estimable men. They had served their clients and themselves with more or less satisfactory results, and now discharged their monotonous functions in a duly monotonous manner. The nominal leader of the Bar—his Majesty's Attorney-General—was absent again through illness, and the Solicitor-General, Sir John Westwood—whose looks were criticised curiously—led the army of the long robe. One

and all, with silks and stuffs by way of tail to the procession, the King's justices passed through the long hall of the florid Gothic structure, that cost the nation a million and a half of money, and still is in process of absorbing millions more in salaries, fees, and costs.

The function was soon over, and then, in the thousand chambers of the building, the formal business of the day was dealt with. Once again the pieces of machinery were got into their appointed places. Once again the creaking, cumbrous, monstrous thing began to work. Amongst the unemployed members of the Bar—which is to say, the majority of barristers—there was much conjecture as to the business outlook. The cause-list was thin to the point of attenuation, but still there was a list. But those who were interested in criminal practice in the magisterial Courts, and at Sessions and the Bailey, were deeply concerned at the state of affairs which the history of the past few months foreshadowed. How far were the Leaguers going to carry their supposed programme? What was to happen if the British juryman failed his country? Was it possible that our boasted *palladium* was breaking down? Britannia might need no bulwarks, but criminal law could not get on without a fearless jury, to

say nothing of fearless witnesses, undaunted by open or veiled intimidation.

It was confidently believed that in his approaching speech at the Mansion House, the Prime Minister would make an announcement of the first importance in reference to the subjects that were agitating the public mind. Since the great fire in Hyde Park, and the committal of the seven accused men for trial, the Leaguers had been comparatively quiet, but their numbers and their funds had further increased, and there were those who saw in the present quiescence only the lull that precedes a storm ; merely an autumn pause before the oncoming of a dark, tempestuous winter.

The ninth of November brought with it the accustomed features of that date, including the presentation of the new Lord Mayor by the Recorder at the Law Courts in the inevitable speech, replete with pompous stereotype. The Chief Justice took occasion to comment on the increasing signs of popular unrest, and various other indications of the times, which made it of paramount importance that the chief magistrate of the City of London should possess very special qualifications for his ancient and important office. His lordship added that so far as his Majesty's judges were concerned, the country might be well assured that the fabric of social safety

would be resolutely maintained, depending as it did on the vindication of justice and the punishment of evil-doers.

With that significant allusion to what every one was thinking of, the civic party was dismissed. The puerile pageant, traditionally associated with the occasion, once more appealed to the contempt of gods and men, and the Lord Mayor's show, having wound its way home through the miry and melancholy streets, was lost to sight in the foggy City.

At the mayoral banquet in the evening, the First Lord of the Treasury made his eagerly expected speech, which, however, contained nothing that had been expected on the burning subject of the hour. The right honourable gentleman was an oratorical acrobat of no mean talent. He winged his flight from trapeze to trapeze with marvellous agility, turned oratorical somersaults at unexpected moments, and came down on his feet whenever it was expected he would arrive on his hands. The whole performance was extremely dexterous and carefully non-committal. When the Prime Minister sat down, of course there were thunders of applause. Criticism of such speeches comes on the following day. Less cautious, but also well applauded, were the utterances of my Lord Mayor. Inspired with the ambitions

of the new broom, and encouraged by the counsel of the Chief Justice delivered earlier in the day, the unfortunate gentleman made a doughty onslaught on the Leaguers, and hinted at drastic action if any of them came before him in the justice room.

With a sense of having risen to the occasion, the chief magistrate retired late to his couch, fully confident that he had struck the right note. But next day, when rising from his bed with a slight headache and other symptoms of discomfort, his lordship speedily discovered that there was something wrong without, as well as within. From an early hour small groups of men were observed in the neighbourhood of the Mansion House, whose gestures and looks indicated no friendly feeling towards its official resident.

The Lady Mayoress, whose training had been provincial, and whose nerves were flustered by the responsibilities of her new position, felt much alarm at the appearance and manner of these men. One of them, moved on peremptorily by the City police, was seen to hurl a large stone, which crashed through a window over the portico on the Walbrook side of the Mansion House. The fellow was promptly arrested and held prisoner, though an attempt to rescue him on the part of his associates almost proved successful.

Throughout the day there was much difficulty in keeping the streets converging at the Mansion House available for the normal traffic. The streams of vehicles from Cheapside and Queen Victoria Street here had to be regulated so as to allow free passage for the other tides of traffic ever pouring in from Cornhill, King William Street, Threadneedle Street, and Princes Street. Yet at this very pivot-point of the congested City traffic, there were persistent attempts to block the way. Again and again the roadways had to be forcibly cleared by the police, and several accidents occurred. Removed from one position, groups formed again at another, scowling defiance at the constables who strove to keep them moving.

For some hours after the first stone was thrown there was no other overt act of violence. But suddenly, as the sombre afternoon was merging into darkness, a pistol shot was heard. The report seemed to come from the corner of Bucklersbury. The crash of falling glass immediately followed, and over the head of a group of people a revolver was tossed high into the air and fell upon the shoulder of a constable. Some eight or ten policemen immediately made a rush in the direction from which the weapon appeared to have been thrown. A violent struggle ensued, in the course of which several persons were



severely injured, but the actual offender escaped capture.

A desperate attempt now was made to clear the space on the west side of the Mansion House, but the difficulty was enormous. A great block of vehicles and foot-passengers spread right across the end of Queen Victoria Street and the Poultry. The mob could only be driven southward or westward through the two narrow necks of Walbrook and Bucklersbury, and those thoroughfares were so packed already that the attempt to clear them was ineffectual. The position was rendered doubly grave by the sudden arrival of another body of police from Cloak Lane, with the result that the people herded in Walbrook found themselves attacked in rear as well as in front. Those who sought to escape *via* the short curve of Bucklersbury were driven against another force of police at the Queen Victoria Street end, behind whom was a phalanx of omnibuses and cabs, wedged together, and rendering escape impossible. Caught thus, like rats in a trap, the crowd fought desperately. The glass door of a stick and umbrella shop, which had been insufficiently secured, was forced by a band of Leaguers, and with such weapons as the stock afforded the police were furiously belaboured and forced to act on the defensive.

At this crisis the electric lights flared out, and those who were near the Mansion House were able to discern the figure of a deformed man standing on the parapet of the bookseller's shop behind which rises the tower of St Stephen's church. He was bare-headed, and the blue light shone upon his grizzled hair and strong, pale features. By a movement of the arm he appeared to convey a signal to the outskirts of the crowd where Queen Victoria Street and the Poultry form an angle. At any rate, as if by concerted action, sudden volleys of stones rattled against the north and west fronts of the Lord Mayor's residence, and a terrific crash of broken glass immediately followed.

Within the Mansion House itself, the Chief Clerk, as adviser of the Lord Mayor in criminal matters, had been in attendance for some hours, and with great difficulty the City Solicitor and the Town Clerk had also been brought together to attend a conference. The narrow passage at the rear of the building was strongly guarded by police, and any approach to it from the west had long been impracticable. The legal officials and superior police officers had obtained ingress *via* George Street on the east, the entrance used being that at which the "Black Maria" usually set down its prisoners for the justice-room.

The Lord Mayor, pale and nervous, had appealed for advice, and was told that the police would soon be able to restore order ; but the organised volley which sent stones and glass into the interior of the official residence showed how futile was that expectation. It was now hastily decided to read the Riot Act, or, strictly speaking, the warning proclamation which the Act contains. This Act—passed some two hundred years before—is intended to meet the case of tumults and riotous assemblies. If twelve or more persons remain assembled for one hour after the reading of the proclamation, all are guilty of felony. The offence formerly was punishable with death.

Not within the memory of living man had the Riot Act been put into force in the City of London, and for a moment a sense of curiosity and expectation silenced the swaying and excited crowd, when the Lord Mayor, in robe of office, came forward, flanked and supported by officials and police, to signal for attention. The little group stood on the stone terrace of the building facing north, and his lordship's voice sounded singularly thin and weak as he began the proclamation, having first held up his hand to secure attention :

“ Our sovereign lord and king chargeth and commandeth all persons assembled im-

mediately to disperse themselves and peaceably depart to their habitations, or to their lawful business, upon the pains contained in the Act——”

The rest was lost in a swift yell of derision and defiance, and the concluding words, “God save the King,” were quite inaudible save to those who were around or immediately below the speaker.

The civic group now retired with such haste that a great burst of laughter came from thousands who observed the retreat. It gave just that touch of humour to the proceedings that saved the situation. The police, marking the sign of better temper, stayed their hands, and when it became known that “God save the King” were the final words of the proclamation that had been read, here and there in the throng a voice started the National Anthem, and vast numbers began to chime in. It was discordant, but hearty, and bore indisputable witness to the personal popularity of his Majesty. The mob, perhaps, had done all that it had intended to do; but, at any rate, the crisis was passed, and in less than the hour’s grace allowed by the Act, the great crowd had marched away in sections, leaving only the broken windows of the Mansion House as evidence of the recent onslaught.

It was not generally known until later that a military force had been hastily got in readiness to aid, if need were, the repressive action of the police. The outcome, however, was, in one sense, disastrous, for it led the authorities to conclude that the worst was over; a miscalculation that facilitated the moves that followed in the daring campaign of the Leaguers.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LEAGUERS AT THE HOME OFFICE

A SHADOW had fallen upon the engagement of Herrick and Aldwyth Westwood. The Westwoods were back in Hill Street, and Herrick also had returned after a long yachting cruise with his cousin, Lord Eastmere. But although he went frequently to see Aldwyth at Hill Street, and was disposed to be more than ever a devoted lover, something had come between them. It puzzled and troubled him. He kept hoping from week to week that the chill would pass away. He hoped, so far, in vain. Aldwyth, of course, was conscious that the chill existed. She blamed herself, and tried to persuade her heart that it ached for nothing more than the rather ordinary tribute that a rather ordinary young man had to offer; was not it her plain duty to be happy in her engagement and in the prospect of marriage that lay not far ahead?

But the fact remained that she was not happy. Hers was a far more subtle temperament than her lover's. What satisfied him left her with a sense of something wanting. She found herself—somewhat to her own surprise—comparing young Herrick with two other men with whom she had been brought in contact. One of these was Marcus White, whose powerful personality had been vividly remembered after that strange interview at the Folkestone hotel. She had seen no more of him, but his name was constantly whispered in connection with the demonstrations of the Leaguers; moreover, she could not forget that there was, as her father had confessed, an old-standing and ominous antagonism between himself and this strange man, who had told her that he knew her mother. It was not that she had any definable feeling for her father's enemy, except that his was a strong, exceptional, and interesting personality. Thus he was often present in her thoughts, and she had an intuitive conviction that he and she would meet again.

Meanwhile there was Father Francis—his, also, was a personality that was powerfully influencing her life and feelings. This priest, ascetic in life as in appearance, in truth was exercising an extraordinary, an almost hypnotic influence over great numbers of women



who belonged to West End society. At every service at which he officiated, St Stephen's Church was packed. His sermons, often appealing, but more frequently denunciatory, were listened to with rapt attention by crowded congregations. He, pre-eminently among the clergy of London, had shown an inspired capacity to deal with the sins and sorrows of the times. He fiercely attributed the latter to the former, and declared that the greatest sinners in all the sinful city were those—a multitude of men and a still greater multitude of women—who lived selfish, idle, and luxurious lives, untouched with divine compassion for the masses, and deaf to the prophetic warnings of evil to come.

From the nucleus of the congregation of St Stephen's, a new society of women, nearly all of whom were delicately nurtured, was called into being, and drew vast numbers of adherents. It was called the Sisterhood of the Kindly Life. There was no conventual establishment and no monastic rule. The sisters still lived in their own homes; they were at liberty to marry, and they dressed, if it pleased them, in the fashion of the hour; but the vast majority discarded the finery and ornaments which cost so much and had once seemed so essential to their happiness.

A bonnet and cloak as simple as those worn by hospital nurses became widely adopted as the uniform of the Sisterhood. There were no actual vows, but two injunctions were solemnly impressed upon the Sisters by Father Francis, as their warden—self-denial in everyday life, and the service of others in every way that each Sister's circumstances permitted. Every day each Sister was to perform at least one act of kindness. Of this Sisterhood Aldwyth Westwood became a member, and, with others of the order, she found much practical scope for helpfulness in ministering to the great number of unemployed men who in the early winter weeks marched into London from great distances in the vain hope of enlisting help from the ruling powers in Church and State.

These marches from provincial centres had assumed most remarkable, and, indeed, dangerous proportions. The great bulk of those who joined in such demonstrations from the provinces were sober, well-conducted, but unlucky beings. Footsore and weary, they tramped through the suburbs into London, and were charitably provided for in halls and schools, where the Sisters attended to their wants; only to leave the capital after a few days with no improvement in their prospects. Long ago the foreigner had been allowed to

get a grip on our industries. So complex had the position become that England could no longer support her own sons on English soil. Even the old soldiers, always numerous in these provincial contingents—men who had fought and bled for their country on far-off battlefields, where pluck and endurance had been lauded in the hour of triumph—were now forgotten and unprovided for in their maturity or old age. The bitter feeling engendered by the failure of successive Governments to grapple with the problem of the unemployed, on statesman-like lines of national policy, now bore fruit. For, while patient endurance was the characteristic of most of the provincial demonstrators, there was a considerable minority ripe for resentful action against the ruling classes. Great numbers of these men having come to London, stayed there, and the magnetism of a powerful organisation attached them practically, if not admittedly, to the forces of the League. The old soldiers, in particular, were welcomed and well paid on account of their experience in discipline, and the qualifications which many of them possessed for marshalling bodies of recruits.

After the riotous proceedings at the Mansion House there was a short respite; but when the Leaguers next loomed prominently into public notice, it was obvious that, instead of being

more or less of a disordered rabble, their ranks partook of the character of an organised force.

Fearful of public disturbance on a more extensive scale, the Government now arranged for a postponement of the trial of the Hyde Park incendiaries. A public application was made at the Central Criminal Court and granted as a matter of course. As soon as this was known, the Leaguers showed their hand. Five thousand strong, they marched to Whitehall and peremptorily demanded an interview with the Home Secretary. That timid functionary was, or was said to be, absent from the building, and a more courageous official—an under-secretary—was put forward to receive a deputation from the serried ranks that filled the thoroughfare. Never since an unhappy king stepped forth from Whitehall Palace, to meet, in the face of an awed and awful multitude, the death to which he was condemned by regicides, had the great street of England's Government witnessed so convincing a manifestation of popular power.

The demand of the deputation was plain and unmistakable. The prisoners awaiting trial must be released. A like claim was made on behalf of those who were still in custody on various charges arising out of the riot at the Mansion House. The under-secretary, with carefully prepared notes in his hand, did

his best to temporize. He was wordy but indefinite. It was not in his power to interfere with the course of justice. If a case for special intervention could be made out in writing it should be duly considered. The clemency of his Majesty the King could only be exercised in a constitutional manner on the advice of the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary, in a matter of such grave import, would have to consult the whole body of Cabinet ministers, but Ministers were out of town. Meanwhile, if he could tender advice, he would strongly urge the deputation to use all possible influence in the interests of peace and quietness——

“Are you going to set 'em free?” roughly interposed a shoemaker named Raggett, one of the spokesmen—the same who had been seen on the roof near the Mansion House.

“I?—impossible!” stammered the under-secretary.

Raggett turned his back contemptuously upon the Government official, and held a whispered colloquy with the other members of the deputation. He was extraordinary, alike in his physical deformity and in intellect. He nourished, it was said, the bitterest hate against the State, for having confined him, improperly as he alleged, in a lunatic asylum.

“Gentlemen——” began the under-secre-

tary, but his appeal for attention was unheeded. Raggett and his colleagues finished their whispered conversation, and without another word or sign marched out of the Government building. There was a call for silence in the street, instantly obeyed, and then the half-crazed shoemaker, mounted on the topmost of a flight of steps, reported in a few terse and savage sentences the failure of the deputation. Revolutionary action invariably brings to the front men who are prepared to out-Herod Herod, followers who become leaders, cranks who establish an ascendancy which no one could have foreseen at the outset of the movement. Such a man was Raggett, whose power with a large section of the Leaguers was immediately manifested by the response to the keynote of his brief harangue. A sullen growl arose from those nearest to the demagogue ; it spread and swelled in volume, until, from the great concourse stretching southward along Parliament Street, and northward towards Trafalgar Square, a terrifying roar of wrath went up from some five thousand throats. It rose and fell, and rose again, reaching its culminating savagery when suddenly each Leaguer raised both arms above his head. Then, as at a signal, ten thousand fists, many grasping cudgels and other rough-and-ready weapons, were shaken in the air.

This united menace, that seemed to include the Home Office, the Treasury, Downing Street, and the very Houses of Parliament, was terrible in its volume and intensity.

So appalling was the tumult, and so electrifying the excitement, that the horses of the troopers in the Horse Guard Shelters reared and plunged forward into the close ranks of the Leaguers who were standing on the pavement. Shouts of anger and fear now rent the air. One horse slipped upon the flagstones and threw its rider heavily among the crowd. The other, entirely beyond the trooper's control, tore wildly through the fleeing mob towards Westminster.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DEVIL'S OWN ON THE DEFENSIVE

THE acute alarm now felt in Government circles led to a hasty decision to embody a large auxiliary force of special constables. A source of much anxiety was found in the rumoured designs of the Leaguers on certain important buildings connected with the Law. The Temple church, and the halls and libraries of the Inns of Court, both north and south of the Strand, were believed to be in jeopardy, and arrangements were made with the Inns of Court Volunteers to protect the prized and ancient buildings from attack or incendiarism. Both within and without the Law Courts a strong force of police was kept on duty day and night, and London solicitors furnished from among their number a large contingent of special constables to safeguard the Law Society's hall and library in Chancery Lane.

Even these precautions were not such as to satisfy the urgent demands of the timid

“better classes” in London, and a cry was raised for more troops. At this juncture, however, the Secret Service agents of the Government were sending in reports that negatived the possibility of reducing the military strength of outlying districts, and pointed to the paramount necessity of maintaining efficiency and vigilance at the naval ports and arsenals. It was beyond question that at this critical moment of domestic history there was a subtle shifting of international cards that was fraught with danger to the country. A revived Russia, it was well known, only waited an opportunity to wound or humiliate Great Britain. The German Emperor, while adroitly masking his real attitude, was believed to be anxious to test the metal of his strengthened navy. Against what country other than Great Britain could the ceaseless activity in the German dockyards be directed? Armoured cruisers, of about 15,000 tons; battleships of from 17,000 to 18,000 tons, with armour ever thicker and guns ever more powerful! All this increased tonnage, sanctioned under the German Navy Act of 1900, meant an expenditure of something like £800,000 upon a single battleship. In 1906, £12,000,000 had been expended on Kaiser William's navy; in 1912, at this rate, German naval expenditure would have climbed to £16,000,000. And,

in the interval, or after, what appalling test of strength and watchfulness might not be put upon the navy of Great Britain?

France, though disposed to be friendly, was fettered by treaties with other Powers; and Japan, whose fleets were no longer confined to Eastern seas, was by some suspected of having a secret understanding with Russia, her former enemy, that involved ultimate designs upon Britain, her present ally. That alliance had not proved so advantageous to the youngest of the Great Powers as the Mikado's government had expected it to be. The shilly-shallying of successive British ministers had at last disgusted the Japanese. Those hardy, patient, and self-controlled Eastern islanders, steadily increasing their marvellous powers, while the islanders of the West were showing marked signs of physical and moral deterioration, had no intention of submitting to a one-sided international bargain. Japan knew her own strength on the high seas, and now prepared to use it ultimately, anywhere and against all comers for her own advantage. Russia had not forgiven and never would forgive the disasters and defeats inflicted on her navy and her troops, but Russian revenge can bide its time. Meanwhile there were grudges of far older standing against Great Britain, and if, while the treaty

of peace with Japan held good, the Japanese would help the new Czar to inflict an indirect injury on England, it was fairly certain that any opportunity would be eagerly seized.

A sinister circumstance, in this connection, was the undoubted fact that the new navy built or bought by Russia was largely officered by men who had been trained and instructed by Japanese experts. A few years before, it would have been deemed inconceivable that a Russian should have submitted to tutelage from the once despised "little yellow men." But the bitter lessons of experience had made their impression even in Russia. The deep-seated desire for restored prestige and power outweighed the national pride; and the Japanese, on their part, were not unwilling to make certain Russian ships and crews efficient for naval warfare, provided such ships remained thousands of miles from Japan and her possessions in the East. Thus it had come about, in the whirligig of time's revenges, that Japan, which had learnt her naval lessons from Great Britain, and had splendidly carried them into practice against Russia, was now supposed to be Russia's secret guide, philosopher, and friend in inculcating the art and science of naval warfare.

These, however, were matters of which the British public in general had but little know-

ledge. For them the shoe pinched nearer home. So dangerous and uncertain were the conditions of life in London, that hosts of prosperous people, who had returned in the autumn, hoping that the tyranny would be over, left town again with their families when it was discovered that the winter months might hold something yet worse in store. But these departures, numerous as they were, made but a small gap in the enormous aggregate life of the capital. Scores of thousands, or hundreds of thousands might go, but millions remained, and must remain ; for here was their lot cast ; here in the misery and murk of the season of fog and slush and drizzle the railroad of life was laid down for them, and to leave the rails was hopeless and impossible.

With the idea of calming the apprehensions of residents and tradesmen, and at the same time in the hope of overawing the Leaguers, the civil and military authorities now organised a patrol of the streets by bodies of police and special constables. At the same time it was noticed that musters and marches of the regular troops and volunteers were of frequent occurrence. It was in connection with the renewed activity of the " Devil's Own " that Herrick now had an exciting personal experience of the perils of the times.

The unexampled slump in legal business

had left him, and great numbers of his brother-barristers, with next to nothing to do. Many of them, in common with himself, had received threats under the sign of the spider, but so far there had been no actual fulfilment of the warning. It was noticeable, however, that fewer men in wig and gown were seen in the streets in the vicinity of the Law Courts, and those who did wear their forensic armour were sure to encounter gibes and insults from some contemptuous tongue. Events were to prove, however, that in the first place the Leaguers were maturing their plans to fly at higher game than the ordinary stuff gownsman.

So altered were the relations between himself and Aldwyth Westwood that Herrick, wisely, perhaps, had deemed it best not to worry her with continued remonstrances, or requests for explanations. The times were out of joint, but the shadow could not last for ever, and his temperament led him to believe that all would yet be well. Meanwhile, his zeal as a volunteer officer was reawakened by concurrent events, and the occupation that drills and marches afforded him was very welcome.

On a memorable afternoon, about a week after the Leaguers' demonstration at Whitehall, the "Devil's Own" were mustered for a march. Groups of officers and men stood

talking in Stone Buildings, Old Court, and New Square, waiting for the complement of rank and file. The men came in from various directions—some by the archway from Carey Street, some through the passage at the south-west corner of New Square, others from the various Chancery Lane approaches. Herrick himself turned in at the large west gateway. Thus it was that he noticed that a muster of another character was at the same time taking place in Lincoln's Inn Fields, probably as preliminary to another and formidable street demonstration on the part of the Leaguers.

Herrick immediately made a report to his commanding officer, and from observations then taken it was seen that the Leaguers were assembling rapidly and in great force. They, on their part, noted the muster of the volunteers, and presently sundry jeers and insults were shouted at the citizen soldiers. Groups of men, who were seen to be wearing the metal disc, gathered close to the open gates and watched the formation of the battalion. The possibility of a collision at once became apparent, for it was intended to march the volunteers through Lincoln's Inn Fields, and, *via* Long Acre, to the West End. There was no other exit from the Inn suitable for marching order in the intended direction; and, on



the other hand, it was pretty obvious that to cross Lincoln's Inn Fields would certainly involve a collision with the Leaguers, whose numbers already largely exceeded those of the battalion. The disc-men, growing more aggressive, now showed a disposition to enter New Square itself, and a hasty council of officers was held, and the order given to close the gates. Instantly angry groans were raised by the Leaguers, and a shrill voice yelled: "Down with the lawyers!" At the same time a rush was made for the wall separating the gardens from the east side of the Fields, and, with no great difficulty, large numbers of the Leaguers clambered to the top and descended on the other side. In this way the flank of the battalion was menaced by a gathering mob. In effect, it looked as if the volunteers were now on the defensive, and derisive laughter greeted the hurried orders of the officers.

Mortified and puzzled at this development, the colonel decided to march immediately. As soon as this was realised, a crash of timber was heard, and it became known that the Leaguers were tearing down the hoarding that enclosed the foundations of an extension of the Land Registry buildings close at hand. The levelled hoarding at once exposed to view great balks of timber, ladders, and stacks

of pickaxes and shovels. It was an unexpected armoury, ready to hand, and the Leaguers immediately availed themselves of its resources. Several heavy pieces of timber and ladders were now dragged towards the Lincoln's Inn archway, triumphant and excited cries bursting from the mob. The next moment these improvised battering-rams were brought to bear with terrific violence upon the gates and brickwork. The unarmed contingent that had scrambled into the gardens urged on their comrades with wild applause, and hurled defiance at the humiliated battalion. "Rats! Rats in a trap! Down with the lawyers!" burst hoarsely from a thousand throats. The colonel turned pale as death, and his horse, terrified by the uproar, plunged dangerously in proximity to his men. Above the din, the order, "Open the gates!" was shouted. But, before it could be obeyed one of them came crashing to the ground. The other was torn aside, and the Leaguers and the "Devil's Own" stood face to face. There was a pause. Then, hurtling through the air, came a pavior's rammer, followed by a stonecutter's mallet, and two privates with anguished faces limped out of the ranks of the volunteers. At the same instant the growing force of Leaguers on the flank made a determined effort to

tear up the iron railings bordering the grass.

“Fix bayonets !” roared the colonel angrily. A howl of rage went up from the Leaguers ; then, suddenly, as if at the crack of doom, every voice was silenced, every face was blanched. The thunder of a great explosion filled the air, followed by crash on crash, and multitudinous reverberations.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE BOMB BRIGADE

THE appalling explosion which checked the impending conflict between the volunteers and the Leaguers, causing the latter to melt away from Lincoln's Inn and rush in surging hordes in the direction of Clerkenwell, was the most terrible outrage that had yet befallen the alarmed capital. It was not without precedent; indeed precedent was, in some respects, carefully followed by the organisers of this desperate attempt to release the imprisoned incendiaries. Nearly fifty years earlier the prison wall had been blown down for a somewhat similar purpose by a desperate gang of Fenians. The effect of that diabolical outrage on the policy of Mr Gladstone is matter of history. On that occasion many houses in Corporation Lane were partially wrecked, four persons were instantly killed, and some forty others were maimed or injured in various degrees. The immediate object

of the prisoners, however, was not attained, for, though a considerable breach was made in the prison wall, none escaped.

On the present occasion the damage to life and limb was somewhat less; only two were killed, and thirty-one injured, but the destruction to property was far more extensive than before. The latter fact was, to some extent, explained when it was ascertained that there had been in reality two explosions, different in character, but rapid in succession.

Early in the afternoon all the prisoners had been taken into the prison-yard for exercise, as usual. Raggett, one of the alleged incendiaries (son of the half crazy shoemaker), was observed to fall out shortly after a small indiarubber ball was thrown over the wall. The ball was supposed to have been thrown by a street boy, and a warder threw it back, not dreaming that it was in reality a pre-concerted signal. Raggett was ordered to join the ranks, but made some excuse about a nail in his boot hurting him, and obstinately kept aloof.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the wall, two men, having the appearance of chimney-sweeps, and whose faces were covered with soot, were observed in the act of wheeling a hand-truck on which was a large barrel. Fitted in the barrel was a funnel, or tun-dish,

which undoubtedly held a fuse. The supposed chimney-sweeps, having wheeled the truck rapidly but carefully to a selected position in close proximity to the prison wall, suddenly deserted it, and disappeared immediately and without question in the adjacent slums. A few people, moved by a fatal curiosity, stopped and gazed at the truck; and a policeman, noticing first the loiterers and then the barrel, approached slowly, and perhaps with some suspicion. Before he could reach the spot, a terrific flame burst from the ignited gunpowder, and with a rending crash a large section of the prison wall fell outward into the street. The unfortunate constable, struck on the temple by a broken paving-stone, fell dead, and by his side a woman, whose face was covered with blood, stumbled with outstretched arms into the gutter and lay there prostrate. Bricks, stones, and fragments of masonry fell in all directions, beating down the shrieking, panic-stricken people as they fled through the adjacent streets. Crash after crash followed, as the walls of other buildings tottered and collapsed; then, as a crowning climax of the outrage, another distinctive detonation came from the Sessions-house, designed, no doubt, to distract attention from the prison. It served, unquestionably, to facilitate the escape

of Raggett and three of his fellow-prisoners, who scrambled over the fallen masonry and got free before the dazed and stupefied warders could realise what was happening. Two warders and three prisoners lay wounded and bleeding in the prison-yard.

In the neighbouring Sessions-house at the time there were only three cleaners and a man who was employed as usher when the Court was sitting. This man subsequently described what he saw. Awed by the gunpowder explosion and the nerve-destroying sounds that followed it, and ere he had time to rush into the street, he suddenly heard a crash of broken glass, as some hard object was hurled through one of the windows of the Court. As it fell on the floor a blue flame shot into the air; there was an ear-splitting report. The building seemed to rock, huge beams gave way and fell, and every window with its framework was blown outwards. A cloud of dust and powdered mortar filled the air. The women lay huddled and screaming in a heap, and the usher, with a gash in his cheek caused by splintered wood, staggered back against the wall, gazing helplessly upon the shattered seat of justice.

In the midst of the welter that followed the foregoing catastrophe, the Cabinet, at a



hastily-summoned meeting, at last decided on something in the nature of drastic action. Since the suppression of the Leaguers, for the time being at any rate, was quite impossible, it was resolved to raid the offices of the *Epoch*, which had become more and more revolutionary in its articles, and was held by the police to have indirectly incited the recent outrage. It certainly was significant that this very moment was chosen for publication of a sketch of the career of Jack the Painter, who was extolled by the *Epoch* as a hero and martyr for his attempts to destroy certain of the royal dockyards in the time of the American war with the mother country. The *Epoch* dwelt on the brutality of the punishment dealt out to this man, who was convicted at Winchester in 1777, and sentenced to be executed at the gate of Portsmouth dockyard. There the wretched man was drawn up by pulleys to a gibbet sixty-four feet high, made of the mizzenmast of the frigate *Arethusa*, higher than Haman hanged on the gallows he had meant for Mordecai. His body afterwards hung in chains at the entrance to the harbour for several years. This, and many another barbarous punishment, said the *Epoch*, was ruthlessly carried out in the sacred name of Justice. "Let Justice be purified by the shedding of blood—

an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, exacted by a counter-claim which no statute of limitations should avail to bar."

Further articles containing like passages were found ready in type when the police in great force made a sudden descent on the offices of the journal; but, apparently, the contingency had been anticipated. No resistance was offered by the staff, but after only a day's interval the *Epoch* reappeared, published at another printing-office, and printed this time in blood-red ink.

The Christmas holidays were drawing near; and, impressed by the lamentable condition of his province, the newly-created Archbishop of London issued a pastoral, which was read from hundreds of pulpits to the assembled congregations. His lordship called upon all faithful children of the Church to keep the approaching Bank holiday, not as a day of feasting and pleasure, but as one of solemn prayer and national humiliation, to the end that the divine mercy might be vouchsafed and the tyranny of the time be ended speedily. He reminded Churchmen that, though too much ignored, the 26th December was the great commemoration-day of the first Christian martyr—Stephen, a man full of faith; Stephen who fearlessly denounced a stiff-necked generation, uncircumcised in heart and ears, rebels

against the Just One, of whom they had been the betrayers and murderers. Christians, so-called, said the Archbishop in this modern time were not less betrayers and murderers of the Just One. They had received the law by the disposition of angels and had not kept it. "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

This episcopal admonition made a deep impression. At St Stephen's Church in particular special services were arranged, and a great street procession was organised for the approaching Bank holiday. But while the pastoral counsel was adopted in many of the metropolitan churches, a spirit of rebellion sprang up in other quarters, and there was much resentment at what was described as an act of ecclesiastical dictation. The publicans, in particular, were furious at the idea of their custom being diminished on one of the great drinking days of the Christian year. In all these past months of stress and trouble the trade had reaped huge gains from the disorder that prevailed. The swing-doors of their Temples of Bacchus at nearly every street corner were never still. Men and women thronged the showy bars; they drank, and drank again, the flaring lights shining on their dulled eyes and sodden faces. They talked,

maundered, shouted choruses, quarrelled, fought; the beer engines poured forth unending streams into innumerable "pewters" and the money poured into the tills. Humanity sank deeper and deeper into the slough of despond and the slime of self-indulgence; and the brewers and publicans reaped their rich reward as licensed purveyors of poison for the people.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE CRANKS' CORNER

IN the sombre days of December a double gloom settled down upon the sacred precincts of Mayfair. But little incense was being heaped on the shrine of luxury and pride. The fire of fashion burnt low, smouldering and smoky beneath the lowering clouds. Even Billy of Mayfair, who was usually as light of heart as he was agile of leg, felt the oppressive influence of things. His friend Joe had become an absolute pessimist for the time being, and even had high words with the wife of his bosom concerning the proposed baptism of his third-born child. Then Mrs Joe craftily enlisted the aid of Father Francis. Joe had a reasonable respect for the clergy, and a still profounder reverence for the peerage. Father Francis, he knew, was the Duke of Portsdown's son; he had been to Dorking for an excursion, and had some acquaintance with the ducal grooms. So, though he

showed fight, he touched his bare forehead, quite prepared for a theological crusher, though not necessarily to be convinced.

"Look 'ere, sir," said Joe, "what's the good of it, that's wot I want to know. Wot's the blessed good of pouring a little water on a baby's 'ead?"

It was an inspiration that enabled Father Francis to give the very answer that appealed to Joe.

"Well, my friend," said he, "we've all got to obey somebody's orders, haven't we?"

"That's right enough," agreed Joe, tightening his belt.

"Well, our Lord commanded it."

Joe brightened instantly; it simplified the position wonderfully.

"Blest if that ain't the best answer I've 'eard," said the stableman cheerfully. And the child was called Francis Joseph—not after the Emperor of Austria, of whom the parents knew nothing, but after the curate in charge of St Stephen's Church, and Joseph, the infant's father.

It was about this time that Billy also began to feel that Father Francis was a friend, though he still avoided church and schools, just as he had learnt to dodge the school attendance officer and Policeman X. In summer weather he had spent most of his

Sundays in the Green Park which was close at hand, or watching the wild-fowl on the ornamental water of St James's, but about noonday on these winter Sundays, he might generally be found at the Cranks' Corner in Hyde Park, listening with more or less wondering looks to the wild and whirling words of the competing speakers. Here, on the battleground won for free speech in many a contest with authority, the cranks let off the steam according to the measure of their crankiness. The pitches were so close together that the groups of listeners almost blended, and an auditor quick of hearing had presented to him a sort of mosaic of oratory that was, to say the least, bewildering. One speaker would be raving against the worthlessness and wickedness of vaccination, while another volleyed and thundered against the Education Act. But, mostly, the changes were rung on Religion, Atheism, and Socialism. Each cult had its champion every Sunday. There was a crank who had his own peculiar interpretation of the Book of Revelation, undertaking to tell his hearers what was signified by the beasts with many eyes, the vials of wrath, and the sealing of the servants of the Lord. He knew who were the horned kings of the Apocalypse, or, at least, some of them,—the Kaiser, the Czar, and the Mikado.



He knew, or thought he did, all about the battle of Armageddon, that terrible conflict, transcending in its terrors every bloody war that men had waged on earth. The war of Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels, "who prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world."

"And where was the great dragon sent?" cried the speaker, "and where had he been at work ever since? 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' Perhaps they didn't think it was a short time," said the speaker, who could be shrewd and logical at times, "but time must not be measured by the little span of a man's earthly life. What was a thousand years in the boundless depths of eternity? And why need there be so much talk about eternity when time itself was so immeasurable—the time of the geological periods, the time of the solar system,—unthinkable, like the distances from star to star.

"And yet some people," the speaker went on, "said that it was all a fable; that there was no such being as the Prince of Darkness. If

men looked around they would see plenty of his handiwork. If there were good spirits, why shouldn't there be evil spirits ; spirits not all alike in power or characteristics, but rank and file, with leaders and commanders—Satan, Beelzebub, Moloch ?” Then he quoted from *Paradise Lost* :—

“First Moloch, horrid king, besmear'd with blood  
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,  
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
Their children's cries unheard, that past through fire,  
To his grim idol.”

And Billy, amongst others, heard and trembled. It was a comfort after that to hear another preacher yonder telling his hearers of One in whose presence the devils, believing, could not but tremble ; of One who cast out devils from the souls of men and boys ; who loved to have the children round Him, and rebuked those who would have kept them from Him.

When Billy found that this same lover of men's souls was put to death by those whom He had sought to serve, that the Jews had shouted “Crucify Him !” and the Roman soldiers had nailed Him to a cross, the boy's heart was hot within him, and his eyes were wet with tears. He had met with many Jews—the dirty, unkempt Jews of Petticoat Lane and Whitechapel, and the rich Jews

of the West End, heavy of nose and watch-chain, silk-hatted, frock-coated, owners of splendid horses, which Joe cleaned down in the mews. And in his childish imagination there sprang up a strange, fantastic picture of a mixed and savage mob of these Jews of modern times assailing with cries and blows their lonely and forsaken King.

"I don't like them Jews," he said one day to his friend Joe.

The stableman rubbed his bullet-head reflectively.

"There's good Jews and there's bad 'uns," he remarked, as one speaking with authority, "just the same as there is in t'other lot. When a Jew's good, he's uncommon good. When he's a bad 'un, he's a cove as can get the blood out of a stone; he's a chap as'll squeeze ye dry, like that there sponge"—throwing one into his zinc bucket. "And, mark my word, Billy, there's plenty of Christians as'll do the same. Six of one and half a dozen of t'other, that's what it is, my lad."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE LOWER CRITIC

ALL the week there had dwelt in Billy's mind that, to him, new and terrible story of the murdered King of the Jews. On Sunday — a bleak, dull day, when the charred trees in the Park stood out grim and black against the heavy sky, he hopped across to the Cranks' Corner, hoping to hear more; but this time there were other voices and other subjects for the crowd. He saw two faces above the clustering people. One speaker was a man whom he had heard before, but failed to understand; the other was Father Francis. The man unknown to the boy by name was Raggett, the rabid social democrat. Even without the torrent of his venomous invective, attention would have been arrested by his appearance.

Stiff black hair stood up on his oddly-shaped head; and the face, behind a bristly grey moustache, reminded Billy of a savage half-

Persian cat that haunted Hill Street mews. The man was fluent, and his high-pitched voice almost rose into a scream as he declaimed his speech to a band of Leaguers mixed with a miscellaneous mob.

“ Yes, that’s what the parsons tell you ! ” he yelled, derisively. “ You’ve to bless the squire and his relations, and always keep your proper stations. That’s Christianity in the country, and it’s pretty much the same up here in London. They’ll tell you a lot about the many mansions up in heaven. Well, we don’t know about that. We haven’t seen ’em ; but we know right enough about the mansions here below. The only mansions they provide for you and me are the work-house, the prison, or the asylum. The rich men keep the others for themselves. There are some pretty good mansions over yonder beyond the Marble Arch, and there are plenty more, and fine ones too, along Park Lane. We don’t get invitations to dinner, do we ? But there is plenty of food there, and good wine, and spirits and beer for their cursed stuck-up servants ; and rich furniture, and soft beds to sleep on, too ; and jewels and precious things of all sorts. Oh ! they do themselves pretty well, depend on it. But why don’t they share out a bit ? Not they ! Hold fast !—that’s their motto. And it is the

same with the land. Don't believe 'em when they say there isn't room in England. There is room, but they won't let you have it. They want the land for their parks and gardens; they want the woods for their pheasants and their sport. The working-man may slave in their fields all day, and sleep in a hovel at night; and if he gets tired of it and comes to London, it's the slum or the doss-house that's his portion. That's good enough for him. Oh yes, Holdfast is a good dog; but I'll tell you something—Grab's a good dog too!"

He paused, almost breathless, and there was a dull mutter of assent throughout the crowd. Above the angry sound the clear voice of Father Francis was heard, a voice of delicate timbre, in striking contrast with the raucous tones of the demagogue. It was the first time he had come amongst the cranks as a competitor for notice, and he had only done it after great misgiving concerning his own powers and the utility of trying them under such conditions. Yet, he asked himself, what right had the clergy of England to shrink from the ordeal? Why should the men under whose lips was the poison of asps, why should the blasphemer, be allowed to hold the field? If the people would not come to the church, ought not the church to go to the people? Was not the Master Preacher of

all time an open-air preacher. Was not the greatest of all sermons preached from the hill-side to the common people, who heard Him gladly? The fields of corn, the trees, the flowers, the common objects of the countryside, had ever furnished simple but convincing themes for One who spake as never spake mortal man before or since. No, he *would not* be a coward! So the young priest put his Bible under his arm and walked across Park Lane to the Cranks' Corner. Was discretion always the better part of valour, or was it really a synonym for cowardice? He went with no idea of entering into argument or controversy with others. He knew that amid much mendacity there was blended not a little truth, though perhaps partial and perverted, in some of those inflammatory speeches. No one knew better the sins of his own order. He himself, in his younger days, like Augustine of old, had drunk deep of the knowledge of evil. Like Tannhäuser, he, too, had lingered in the Venusberg, and gone back to it again and yet again; but ever in his ears—sometimes near and sometimes from afar—had sounded the wonderful chant of the pilgrims; the rhythm of their steadfast march always reproached him; until, suddenly, shame and remorse had wrought a miracle, and, stumbling and mistrustful of himself, he joined the



pilgrims' ranks, and understood the music of that mighty march as he had never done before.

Here, on this unique spot in London, men were always pouring out their own ideas, intoxicated with the exuberance of their own verbosity; but he himself had resolved to try another plan. What could he, or any man, offer better worth hearing than the words of the book under his arm, which contained the lively oracles of God Himself!

He knew he should not meet any of the Higher Critics in the Park. The German professors and the English divines, who sit comfortably in their book-lined studies and pen presumptuous onslaughts on the faith once for all delivered to the saints, work their mines of infidelity from a safe distance. These theological dynamitards do not come into the open with their bombs. Their machines—not less infernal—take the form of neatly bound volumes on the bookstalls, sold at popular prices, handy to explode the faith and hope of thousands of their fellow-creatures, leaving them torn and mangled in soul upon the rocks of desperation and despair. But the Lower Critics, he knew, found in the Park their happy hunting-ground. Why should they have it all their own way in Christian England?

“ *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. . . . And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and out of the things that are written in this book.*” That solemn record gave him courage. So, standing up beneath the murky sky, with the din of the traffic on one side and the screaming voice of Raggett the Raver on the other, Father Francis, pale but calm, read aloud some passages from one of the oldest and most wonderful books in the Bible. How marvellous was the contrast between the words of the iconoclast and the words echoing down from the far-off centuries to the fool who had said in his heart, “There is no God !”

“ *No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you ! . . . But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee : Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*”

Raggett was speaking again. "If we don't look after ourselves," he shouted, "who do you think is going to help us? Tell me that!"

*"With him is strength and wisdom," read the priest, "the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bonds of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to life the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again." . . .*

"Yes," roared Raggett, harping on his theme, "when they talk to you about heaven, tell them heaven helps those that help themselves. You've got to make your own heaven, and now's your time to do it!" . . .

*"But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. . . . Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for Him? Will ye accept His person? Will ye contend for God? Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock Him?" . . .*

“ . . . Seeing’s believing, to my mind, and possession’s nine points of the law. . . .”

*“ Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up thy loins now and I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding . . . whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? . . . Or who shut up the sea with doors when it brake forth . . . And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place? . . . Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? ” . . .*

Raggett had paused and was glaring at the priest over the heads of the people. “There’s a lot of texts going about,” he said, pointing. “I’ll give you one: ‘Down with them, down with them, even to the ground!’”

A surging murmur of approval ran through the crowd, and menacing faces were turned towards Father Francis. His calm, clear

voice went on, and only two red spots glowing on his pale cheeks showed that he was even aware of the pointing finger and the savage faces.

*“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? . . . Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?”*  
He paused a moment.

*“Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.”*

Raggett's arm was raised, but he faltered. Nearly all the faces were turned towards the man at whom he had pointed, and the crowd was strangely still.

Father Francis shut his Bible, and stepped down.

## CHAPTER XXV

### MARCUS WHITE GIVES ORDERS

ON the twenty-first of December the Law Courts "rose" for the Christmas vacation. It was the end of the gloomiest and slackest term within the memory of living lawyers. The abnormally disturbed condition of social and business life had reacted on the whole profession, in both its branches. Suitors shunned the Courts; jurymen persistently absented themselves in spite of threats and fines; witnesses would not come for love, money, or subpœnas; and here at the Royal Courts, as at the Bailey, case after case broke down for want of evidence. The whole machinery of the law was out of gear. The outrage at Clerkenwell gave rise to anxious fears lest it should be repeated in the chief Palace of Justice, and day and night strong relays of police, concealed as far as possible from sight, kept vigilant observation and guarded all approaches to the building. Nearly

half the detective force of Scotland Yard was employed on this special duty, for it was known that the leader, or leaders, of the League felt special enmity against all officials and professional followers of the law ; while some believed that here, at the centre of the legal system, in some dark way a deadly attack might be expected.

Such was the critical condition of affairs, and so grave, in particular, the problem of repressing crime and protecting life and property, that all the judges of the King's Bench Division were officially requested to remain in town, or near to it, during the vacation. Communications of an urgent character reached the Chief Justice from the Lord Chancellor and also from the Home Office. Eager questions and wild surmises were whispered on every side by members of the Bar, but no one seemed to know what was going to happen, and, apparently, least of all his Majesty's Government.

Herrick, as he sauntered down the great hall towards the Strand, was overtaken by his old informant, Henshaw, whom he had only occasionally seen since the Hyde Park conflagration.

Henshaw touched his hat. "A merry Christmas, Mr Herrick."

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said the young man, gloomily.



“I expect we’ll be worse before we’re better,” opined the detective.

“What are they going to do?”

“Lord knows, sir. Everything’s at sixes and sevens. But one thing’s pretty certain—we shall soon be in the dark.”

“What do you mean?”

“The gas-workers are coming out on strike, and the electric-lighting men are pretty sure to follow suit.”

“I suppose these cursed Leaguers are at the bottom of it?”

“Ah! ask their General—that’s what they call him among themselves—though they do say some of his men have got so out of hand he can’t stop ’em now, even if he wants to. That man Raggett, for one; why, he’s as mad as a March hare, and he means to let hell loose on London before he’s done with it.”

“Is Marcus White really their so-called General?”

Henshaw nodded, and glanced round to see that no one overheard them.

“Is he in London?”

“Certainly he is, living as bold as brass not five minutes’ walk from here. He’s got a great flat down at the end of Surrey Street, overlooking the Embankment.”

“Then, man, why, in heaven’s name, don’t

you lay him by the heels?" said Herrick, vehemently.

"Ah! why don't we? I'll tell you. Because the Home Secretary is afraid of the music; and there are other reasons, too. We can't prove anything against him, and he is stronger than we are, just at present; and if we did get him, no jury would dare find him guilty. What's more, Mr Herrick, no counsel would dare stand up in Court to prosecute him—unless you would," he added.

"Indeed, I would," said Herrick, grimly.

The detective stood back and looked at the young advocate's face. "I believe you," he said, admiringly. "Well, you won't get the chance, I'm afraid."

"Perhaps that depends on the police."

"We're nearly done; I know that. Mortal men can't stand the worry and the work of it day and night, and everybody swearing at us all the time. They'll have the Force on strike if this game lasts much longer—then God help London!" He nodded and passed on; but returned again. "I'll tell you one thing," he said, in a lowered voice: "There's going to be a meeting here"—he jerked his head towards the Courts and offices behind them—"all the K.B. judges."

"Ah! I knew *that*," said Herrick.

"To be sure; your friend Sir John West-

wood would know. He'll have to come too, of course. And there'll be a good many more."

"Who else?"

"All the police magistrates, the Clerkenwell and Middlesex judges, the Recorder and the Common Serjeant, and our boss, the Chief Commissioner."

"A multitude of counsellors!"

"And not much wisdom, I expect," was the detective's comment.

"When do they meet?"

"Christmas Eve—the 24th. Good-night."

They parted at the southern entrance, and Herrick walked over to the Temple, pondering. He still had in his pocket the threatening missive he received at Folkestone; but though ever since then he had had a sense of being shadowed, no actual evil had yet befallen him. It was not so, he knew very well, with many others who had been similarly warned. Disasters of various sorts had overtaken them—street assaults, mysterious accidents by day, and onslaughts by masked robbers in the night. He had a feeling that he himself had not been spared through oversight, but by design.

Not far away from Paper Buildings, to which he took his way rather from habit than because he had anything to do there,—

in a big room overlooking the river, there sat a man who could have told him all about it.

In the appearance of Marcus White a marked change had been wrought since Herrick had left him at the Folkestone hotel. The swarthy look had given place to a peculiar pallor; the veins stood out upon the temples, and beneath his eyes were purple shadows. But the eyes themselves still burnt with the fire that had so impressed Aldwyth Westwood five months ago.

The firelight played upon his face, as he sat with head thrown back, his eyes seeming to study the scroll-work on the handsome ceiling.

A foreign-looking man who stood a few feet away waited patiently for his attention—a man whose sun-tanned, wind-roughened skin told plainly of the sea. His style of dress confirmed the impression, and there were sailor's earrings in his great red ears.

"You understand?" said Marcus White, his gaze coming down to the man's face.

"Yes, General, but——"

"There is no 'but.' You understand?"

"Yes, General."

"Everything is on board?"

"Yes, General."

"You can trust your men?"

Pedro showed his white teeth in what was intended for a smile. The answer was sufficiently convincing.

“ Steam is to be kept up day and night, in case you are wanted.”

“ That will be so, General; but—pardon— if one might know when we are likely to clear out of the river ? ”

“ On the twenty-fourth, after dark—probably about this time ”; he glanced back through the great blindless window at the darkened sky. “ It will be dark enough ? ” he asked.

“ Quite dark enough, General.”

“ What is the weather likely to be ? ”

“ One must expect squalls at this time of the year, General; but your quarters will be well protected, and you do not fear the sea, though in a boat like that——.” He paused significantly.

Marcus White stared into the fire. The other waited awkwardly, then said :

“ All shall be ready when it suits you to come aboard, General.”

“ I stay here.”

The man’s surprise was manifest.

“ But, my General, I understood——”

Marcus White waved his hand. “ There will be other passengers.”

“ Where are they to be landed, General ? ”

“ You will come here for sealed orders on the twenty-fourth, at noon.”

“ Sealed orders ? Yes, General, but when am I to open them ? ”

“ When you sight the Channel Islands.”

A questioning look came to the man's face, but there was a glint in the eyes of Marcus White that checked him.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE CAPTURE OF THE JUDGES

THE weather had suddenly turned to bitter cold, and, in spite of prevailing alarms, every one had something more or less obvious to say on the unfailing subject. Disaster may impend, kingdoms may totter to their fall, but through all the steadfast Briton harps on the text of the barometer. "Dry and much colder; freshening north-easterly wind," was the record of the morning, and the afternoon abundantly confirmed its truth. His Majesty's judges, for the most part elderly gentlemen, and necessarily leading sedentary lives, felt, and liked not, the eager, nipping air. They reached the Law Courts in the dusk of the afternoon for their projected conference, feeling not a little ill-used that, on Christmas Eve of all days in the year, such a conference should be needed.

Most of them drove by roundabout routes to the judges' entrance in Carey Street;



others deemed it safer to approach on foot, and entered the great building either east or west, from Bell Yard, or Clement's Inn. None but the police were using the great main entrance in the Strand, which had been closed and strongly guarded ever since the rising of the Courts for the vacation. The street scenes of the past few days, and the threatening conduct of the people towards those who drove in private carriages or motors, had produced a notable effect upon the traffic. Many of the omnibuses had been taken off the streets. Numbers of the cabmen, long discontented with their lot, had joined the Leaguers, and people who did hire a hansom or four-wheeler had to submit to what the driver considered the fare should be in the special circumstances of the moment. But the Strand, like other main thoroughfares, was thronged with foot passengers, roadway as well as pavement, and any sort of wheeled traffic could only be carried on under slow and apologetic conditions. All of which tended to prevent punctuality on the part of the functionaries of the law, and to increase their sense of hardship and uneasiness. The Law had so long ridden rough-shod over the people, that it seemed especially surprising that things were taking such a different turn.

By a quarter past four, however, all but

three of the judges and magistrates and Sir Robert Hill, Chief Commissioner of Police, had arrived, and in the big room selected for the discussion, scattered groups stood in earnest conversation on the urgent questions of the hour.

It was a memorable gathering. The Master of the Rolls was supported by all the Lords Justices of the Court of Appeal. The Lord Chief Justice had as his judicial satellites a dozen judges of the King's Bench Division—all, in fact, save those who were incapacitated by serious illness. Both the Judges of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division were present, and also those important but lesser lights of the law, the three City judges, and the Chairmen and deputy-Chairmen of Sessions for the Counties of London and Middlesex. The Lord Mayor had been invited to attend, but a serious nervous disorder from which he had suffered ever since the riotous scenes at the Mansion House on the tenth of November, made his presence impossible. Twenty of the stipendiary magistrates from the Metropolitan Police Courts had come in obedience to the summons, two having recently died, and the others being confined to their beds through illness.

Sir John Westwood, who was known to

have been suffering from insomnia, stood, haggard and silent, by one of the windows, while Lord Malvern expounded to him and a few others his personal views as to the drastic measures required to meet the crisis. His lordship was of opinion that the King, who unfortunately still lay ill at Windsor Castle, should be advised to summon a special session of Parliament for the purpose of passing an Act for the suppression of the League, after the precedent adopted many years earlier in dealing with the Land League in Ireland.

“I doubt whether we want more legislation, my lord,” said Westwood. “But we do need a stronger executive.”

“I agree with Sir John,” said one of the group—Mr Justice Wigham, a man of downright type and resolute manner. “The plain fact is that the civil power has broken down. When that happens order can only be restored by the military arm.”

“Hear, hear!” chimed in several; for the group was now growing larger.

“Kitchener would be the man, if he were back from India,” said the Master of the Rolls.

“He is back, my lord; he arrived yesterday; but he’s ill,” said the Solicitor-General.

“Everybody’s ill,” observed Mr Justice

Barling. "Illness has its advantages at the present time. I think I shall be ill myself." The pleasantry was received with coldness.

The learned judge was known to be a judicial joker of an inveterate type, but his brethren of the bench considered there was a "time for all things." Similarly, Mr Harrowden, the well-known merrymaker of the magisterial bench, talking to some colleagues at the other end of the room, received no encouragement when he essayed to launch a little witticism and support it with a laugh.

"Order, order!" exclaimed the Chief Justice, raising his voice. "This is quite unseemly."

"My brother Barling shouldn't set such a bad example," whispered Mr Justice Hartmill to his neighbour.

"Things are pretty bad, but I suppose you know there is a possibility of something worse behind?" The speaker was Sir Gwilliam Ranthorn, a well-known judge, amongst whose excellent qualities a discreet reticence could not be numbered. "I had it on excellent authority," said his lordship.

"Had what?" asked some one.

"Why, Germany is working at the wires, as usual. All this domestic disorder in England is being utilised abroad. Don't be

surprised at anything you hear within the next few days." He nodded wisely.

"Of course we've all heard rumours," said Sir George Wigham, rather bluntly. "But even if they mean war, England can't be attacked without some reasonable pretext."

"A pretext, if you like, but not necessarily a reasonable one," returned Sir Gwilliam, warmly. "When will their army be stronger; and hasn't the Kaiser got all the ships he wanted while we've been twiddling our thumbs?"

"That is not the worst of it," chimed in Sir Borrall Carnes, who, as President of the Admiralty Division, knew more about shipping and seamen than all the rest. "German seamen swarm in our mercantile marine, and German pilots can do as they please with hundreds upon hundreds of British vessels."

"It's monstrous! It's madness!" declared Sir Gwilliam.

"Yes, yes," assented the Chief Justice. "I am disposed to endorse all you say. But that's the business of the Admiralty and the Board of Trade. We, as guardians of civil order, and bound to preserve the King's peace, must confine ourselves to our proper functions."

As his lordship ended, the electric light went out, and loud exclamations were fol-

lowed by a curious silence, broken in a moment by the voice of Mr Justice Barling. "Why are his Majesty's judges like the heathen?" he was asking. From a shadowed corner came the prompt reply of Mr Harrowden: "Because they sit in darkness."

"Lights, please; lights of some sort," demanded Lord Malvern, testily.

Alert attendants soon procured them—lamps and candles, always in readiness for an emergency, were brought in and placed on the great baize-covered table. At a sign from the Chief Justice there was a general move to the surrounding chairs.

"The business of the meeting must not be delayed any longer," said his lordship, looking round before he took the presidential chair. "Probably all who were summoned are now present?"

"All but Sir Robert Hill," said an attendant, who had checked the arrivals at the door.

"It is very desirable that the Chief Commissioner should be here," remarked the Master of the Rolls.

A knock came on the door, and the attendant, opening it, had a whispered conversation with some one who could not be seen from the table. The attendant looked round: "My

lord, Major Rollin, one of the Assistant Commissioners, is here.”

“Let him come in,” said the Chief Justice, dropping wearily into his chair.

The Assistant Commissioner advanced into the room, and it was noticed by all that, though self-possessed, he was extremely pale.

“I regret to say, my lord, that Sir Robert cannot possibly be here.” The judges exchanged glances. Major Rollin hesitated a moment, and then continued: “The fact is, we have had a very urgent message over the wires from Windsor. A large demonstration of the Leaguers is being organised near the Castle, and every man that we can spare must be despatched there. The Chief Commissioner is now making the necessary arrangements. Your lordship will perhaps excuse me?”

The Assistant Commissioner bowed and was gone almost before his hearers realised to the full the ominous information he had given them.

At that moment the telephone bell began to ring. The face of the attendant, as he listened to the message, was watched by all with some anxiety.

“Well?” demanded Sir Gwilliam. “What is the message?”

“Apparently from the Home Office, my



lord— One moment. Yes ? ” —listening—  
 “ Very well.” Then turning towards the  
 table: “ They wish to communicate with  
 the Lord Chief Justice.”

Lord Malvern rose at once and went across  
 to the instrument. “ Well, what is it ? Yes  
 —I am Lord Malvern. What ? Now—im-  
 mediately ? ” The hum and buzz of the  
 machine continued, ringing the changes of  
 question and answer in the usual fashion.  
 Then his lordship came back to the table,  
 looking very grave.

“ Matters of great urgency have arisen, and  
 our presence is desired immediately to confer  
 with the Lord Chancellor and the Home  
 Secretary, who are busily engaged on affairs  
 of State. I am to request all who are here  
 to accompany me at once.”

“ Where ?—to Downing Street or White-  
 hall ? ” asked several voices.

“ To the House of Lords—the Home Secre-  
 tary is there with the Chancellor at this  
 moment.”

“ Westminster !—easier said than done,”  
 murmured one of the judges.

The telephone bell rang out again, and  
 once more the Chief Justice hurried to the  
 instrument and listened. “ Yes, I hear. Do  
 you say at the Temple Pier ? What vessel ?  
 —the *John Milton* ? Yes.”

He turned to his anxious colleagues. "It is considered unsafe and impracticable to drive to Westminster, but a paddle-steamer—the *John Milton*—has been sent to the Temple Pier to convey us to Westminster. Come, gentlemen, we are the servants of the State and there is no time to lose."

And no time was lost. All rose from their seats, pushing the chairs back in noisy haste. Very few of those present had taken off their overcoats, owing to the coldness of the room. Hasty messages were given to the attendants for the coachmen who were waiting in Carey Street, and in a few minutes, split up into small parties, the whole judicial company emerged by various doors on the Clement's Inn side of the building. They hurried across the crowded, turbulent Strand, with a few constables acting as an escort, and made their way, some *via* Essex Street, and others through Arundel Street, to the Temple Pier. A cutting wind greeted them on the Embankment, and scattered snowflakes heralded a coming storm.

The hiss of the escaping steam was heard, and the masthead light, with here and there a lantern on the decks, showed them the outline of the *John Milton*, lying alongside the pier, her bow towards Westminster.

"I thought the County Council had sold the *Milton*."

“ Well, here she is, and the sooner we’re on board and out of this the better,” said one of the magistrates as they hurried down the steps.

The captain was already on the bridge, and one of his great earrings gleamed in the faint light of a lantern. “ All below, please,” he called out sharply.

One of the seamen led the way to the saloon, and in a few moments the complement of passengers was completed. The rattle of the movable gangway was heard, as the men upon the pier withdrew it ; then, as the paddle wheels slowly began to revolve, the taut ropes strained and throbbed ere they were thrown loose. The doors of the saloon were closed.

“ Prisoners for the first time in our lives. They’ve turned the tables !” ventured Mr Justice Barling, but no one took any notice of the joke. The sway of the steamer and churning of the water told them that she was clear of the landing stage. But presently looks of inquiry and surprise were exchanged amongst the passengers. “ By Jove ! Westwood,” said one of them, “ they’ve put the boat about ! ”

Sir John Westwood rushed to the doors of the saloon and tried to open them. The doors were locked and barred.

“ Great Scott ! we’re heading for London

Bridge!" exclaimed some one else. "What does it mean?"

They made a dash to the portholes and tried to open them; but they were fixed and firm.

The clang of a well-known signal from bridge to engine-room reached their ears. "That means 'full speed ahead!'" said the last speaker; and they stood aghast and helpless as the *John Milton* raced down the river towards the open sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

At his window, overlooking the Embankment, Marcus White was watching. A grim smile played across his features as the lights of the steamer rushed eastward, and soon were lost to view in the black and bitter night.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE BLACK CHRISTMAS

THE elements ignore, and thus subdue, the rage of men. Wind alone would not have cleared the streets, but wind and snow together drove loiterers and roisterers alike to shelter. And in the midst of the snowstorm Henshaw's prediction was fulfilled. The lighters of London—the men at the gasworks and electric lighting stations—threw down their tools; the lamplighters “struck,” and presently a great horror of darkness fell on the distracted citizens. The hours went on, and the snow still fell, deadening the sounds of night, muffling the city in a mighty shroud. This gradual hush of London seemed to many far more appalling than its familiar roar.

But towards midnight, here and there, custom asserted itself, in spite of adverse influences, and the church bells reminded residents, at any rate those in the central

districts, that this, in very truth, was Christmas Eve.

Over the broad squares south of St Pancras the deep-toned bells chimed out the ancient hymn :

“Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
To you and all mankind.”

Yet darkness and distress weighed on the silent dwellings, and the “shining throng” of angels that once appeared to Eastern shepherds brought no message to the British Babylon, nor showed a glimmer of their glorious wings. The last chime died away ; and soon the snowfall ceased. Then London slept, or tried to sleep, till, once again, after a long night of moaning wind, wan daylight stole across the white-draped roofs. Once more the bells were heard, but this time not in chimes ; and through the streets, upon the frozen snow, dim muffled figures hastened to the churches. Mostly these worshippers were girls and women—courageous keepers of the Christian feast ! Thus was it aforetime in that mysterious Easter dawn, when a woman, first of all,—a woman of the town—came hurrying to the Holy Sepulchre.

It was not till the grey dusk of the afternoon that the first warning of most portentous happenings reached the ears of London citizens. Suddenly shrill-voiced newsboys

came yelling through the gloom; and then the croaking note of hoarse-toned men was heard—at first far off; then nearer, nearer, coming and going through the streets and squares.

*Epoch! Epoch!! Epoch, SPECIAL!!!*

Puzzled faces peered from behind blinds, and eager people rushed out to their door-steps.

*Epoch! Epoch! SPECIAL EDITION!*

GERMAN FLEET OFF PLYMOUTH!

PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD ON FIRE!

HOSTILE SQUADRON IN NORTH SEA!!!

Thus, on the anniversary of the day that centuries ago had brought the glorious greeting, "Peace on Earth," came the dire news that England's foe, the Prussian Eagle, at last was going to make the long-intended swoop. The bugles sounded over land and sea, "War, son of hell" was loose—

"Contumelious, beastly, mad-brained war."

\* \* \* \* \*

It seemed incredible! Talk of invasion there had been from time to time, but long immunity had made men disbelieve in such a possibility. In like manner it had seemed



inconceivable that such upheavals as had recently convulsed many a continental town could be repeated here in England. Yet London was bearing reluctant witness to the fact.

And now—

“There is a sound of thunder afar,  
Storm in the South that darkens the day,  
Storm of battle and thunder of war.”

Would English hearts respond this time to the old war-song? Would English grit once more avail to hurl back the advancing enemy?

Even now, in many minds, after the first shock of such intelligence, there was a disposition to discredit it as based on exaggerated or sensational reports. Yet here in black and white the *Epoch* gave the circumstantial story. In brief, it was as follows:

German spies had discovered, or pretended to discover, an intrigue between the Duke of Saxe-Cobourg Gotha and the British Government. The Duke's sympathies, as well as the ties of relationship, it was said, allied him to the royal house of England. English by birth, and Prussian only by adoption, on succeeding to the Duchy this grandson of Queen Victoria had found his position one of exceptional difficulty. Political controversy in the Duchy had been revived or manufactured. The Premier had found occasion to resign,

and rumours of a stormy interview between the Kaiser and the Duke had got abroad.

At the same time the Emperor, whose navy had now attained most formidable proportions, found himself checkmated by Lord Downland in respect of a long-cherished German scheme for acquiring Madeira from the Portuguese. It was supposed to be a purely commercial project, but the British Foreign Secretary knew better. The island of Madeira, lying only four hundred miles from Morocco, and not remote from England, possessed much to recommend it in German eyes. It was, in truth, a Naboth's Vineyard. The owners of Madeira could not only cultivate the vine, but they could find plenty of accommodation for a coaling station for the German navy. All of which was well understood, though politely disguised, in diplomatic circles. Lord Downland's management of the situation had been supplemented by the invaluable influence of his royal master, with whom the King of Portugal and the King of Portugal's ambassador at St James's had a complete and cordial understanding. From all of which it came to pass that, like Ahab of old, the monarch of united Germany was vexed in spirit. A powerful German fleet appeared one day off Lisbon, but nothing untoward occurred. The surprise visit was

not a lengthy one, and the great engines of destruction—battleships, armoured cruisers, and destroyers—vanished as suddenly as they had arrived, in the enfolding mists of the Atlantic.

Then over the cables came intelligence of the indisposition of the Kaiser, and of a projected sea voyage as the remedy recommended by the royal physicians. The excellent advice of the faculty was promptly followed. The magnificent Hamburg liner, *Schiller*, was made available for his Majesty's accommodation, and the cruise was said to afford opportunity for testing certain remarkable improvements in turbine engines, which keenly interested the Emperor.

Nor was this all. The Kaiser's influence with the new Emperor of all the Russias had become quite paramount, and concurrent rumours of a combined movement of Imperial squadrons in the North Sea had added to the already serious uneasiness of the British Lion. The Eagle and the Bear were on the pounce!

Time and the hour had been well chosen. The British capital was in the throes of internal discord, fomented by the industrious agencies of foreign powers; and Christmas, with its holiday closure of all public departments, admirably served to emphasise the opportunity.

Long ago the risks of invasion had been publicly discussed by a prime minister of England, who had dismissed the idea as quite impracticable. But there were naval and military experts and others who thought otherwise. The unmasked landing of from 60,000 to 100,000 foreign troops on these shores certainly would be a hazardous achievement which many things might combine to defeat. But, assuredly, it was not impossible ; especially if the way should be cleared for such a landing by the disablement of the naval ports, and the defeat of one or more of the squadrons charged with watch and ward over our extended coast-line.

It was known to the naval authorities that Portsmouth and Portland were peculiarly exposed to the form of attack which Admiral Togo had so persistently tried at Port Arthur, and which, a few years earlier, the Americans had adopted at Santiago. To bottle a harbour by sinking a merchant ship in its mouth was a device that might be tried in England, as it had been tried abroad. If such an attempt succeeded, invasion in military force might become a comparatively easy task. Granted the feasibility of an invasion, and then what France had suffered in the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, England might have to endure by ceding Kent or Yorkshire to the

strong man armed. What happened to the Kingdom of Hanover might happen — preposterous though it seemed — to the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The Germans, almost insolently, had shown their hand for years. They had said to Britain: “You cannot keep the sea for ever. We mean to take it from you; the trade first, and then—the flag.” There were thousands of Germans in our forecastles, scores of German masters and mates on the bridges of our merchantmen, and German pilots had been allowed to know all that charts and practical experience could tell them of our coasts and harbours. One and all, they had an unconcealed aim—to make the Teuton sea-lord of the world. Yet, knowing all this, England, like a giant drugged with deadly wine, had slumbered in apathy.

Had the fateful hour really struck at last? Here, indeed, was a Naboth’s Vineyard worth coveting, for England and the English-speaking States on the other side of the Atlantic controlled between them four-fifths of the gold production of the world; England and the United States held a third of the dry land, owned four-sevenths of the shipping, two-thirds of the coal, and more than half of the world’s iron and steel. A splendid prize! A glorious heritage! Could Germany wrest

it in part from the Anglo-Saxons, or would Britain, aided or unaided, rouse herself at last and hold her own ?

“Of old sat Freedom on the heights,  
The thunders breaking at her feet,  
Above her shook the starry lights,  
She heard the torrents meet.”

But now ? Could Freedom sit unmoved ?

“Grave mother of majestic works,  
From her isle-altar gazing down,  
Who, God-like, grasps the triple-forks,  
And King-like wears the crown.”

But now ? Could Britain's navy hold the triple-forks against her foe ?

It was a solemn question, which, in that dark Christmastide, many asked themselves, in doubt and fear.

The old national spirit, proud and patriotic, that, spite of blood and toil, had carried Freedom to the splendid heights, had lapsed from its virility. What could England hope from the hordes of stunted, ill-fed, debilitated men and youths who for months past had been thronging the streets of her capital, and taking ransom from its nerveless and submissive middle-class citizens ?

The hour had come. The drugged giant must awake and fight for life, or lie at the proud foot of a conqueror !

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

THE daring *coup de main* of Marcus White had met with the most amazing and complete success. With the exception of the Chancery judges, who, for purposes of criminal law, were a negligible quantity, every judge and magistrate entrusted with the maintenance of law and justice in the capital of England had been swept into one net. There could be no summons, warrant, or indictment, in the absence of these judicial officers, anywhere outside the City boundary. Arrests would be idle, for no magisterial hearing or trial could follow. The strong arm of the law, already greatly weakened, now was wholly paralysed! One and all, the judges and magistrates had disappeared, carried by a cockleshell steamer into the mystery of the darkness and the sea.

People were full of their own affairs, "fear was in the way," and apprehension for themselves and their families left men but little



power or wish to think about the functionaries of State. Moreover, on Christmas Eve the colossal outrage became known to only a very few, and knowledge came too late for any attempt to arrest the steamer in her reckless rush into the night.

Heads of departments had gone out of town—eager to escape the depression of the looming Christmas holiday in London. The War Office, the Admiralty, and the Home Office were in charge of messengers and caretakers. These circumstances, carefully counted on by the wire-pullers of Germany, had also played into the hands of Marcus White in his long-cherished, revengeful war against the representatives of the law of England.

The police were the first to learn what had happened. The startling story of the capture at first was scoffed at; but when the truth was made quite sure, the effect upon the Force was staggering. The police had long felt that there was a power arrayed against them which could not be subdued by ordinary means. They knew the extent to which the normal machinery of the criminal law had broken down. And now it was completely shattered! The men were powerless, and realising the fact, they felt like straws borne on the waves of a tumultuous river towards an unknown sea.

The general public were entirely ignorant of what had happened, and the news that came from the naval ports late on the afternoon of Christmas Day was too absorbing to permit of much inquiry about what was taking place nearer home.

Whatever families of other judges and magistrates might be asking or wondering, Aldwyth Westwood, as yet, knew of no reason for special anxiety about her father. For the past few weeks he had scarcely been at home. Weary of the police escort which had been told off to accompany him daily from Hill Street to the Law Courts, he had taken up his quarters at the Inns of Court Hotel, going not at all to his chambers in the Temple, but traversing, as he thought unnoticed, the short distance between Lincoln's Inn Fields and Carey Street. There, in the room allotted to him as one of the law officers of the Crown, and burdened with his colleague's official work as well as his own, the Solicitor-General had passed the days, forcing his brain to work, and haunted ever with the dread of a physical relapse.

The eager people who rushed to the newsagents' shops on the morning of Bank Holiday were not seeking news concerning his Majesty's judges, but were hoping to learn more of the movements of the hostile fleets and the re-

ported conflagration at Portsmouth dockyard. News there was none. Not a single journal had been published. The great body of compositors had followed the example of the gasworkers; and the *Epoch*, which alone among London journals could have commanded the services of the men, had published nothing since its special edition of the previous day.

Baulked at the shuttered newspaper shops, hosts of people made for the railway stations in the hope that the bookstalls might have been supplied with special news. But here, too, everything was blank. Nothing authentic was ascertainable; but rumours were going round of interrupted communication with the provinces, of wires cut in all directions, and, worse still, of mysterious explosions in several tunnels, which blocked certain of the railways, and severed the links between London and the coast. An air of awe and anxious expectancy appeared on the faces of the bewildered people, and, too excited to remain in their houses, as the day wore on they came in ever-increasing numbers into the streets, until the snow on road and footway was churned into black and penetrating slush.

Multitudes flew to drink, at once their heaven and hell. There was no organised

march or demonstration of the Leaguers, but everywhere they were seen in knots and groups. The sign of the Spider was more in evidence than ever, just at the moment when Kraken, monster-spider of the deep, seemed to have risen to the surface of the sea to crush the naval strength of England.

In the early afternoon, thousands of people assembled in Trafalgar Square, and rabid speakers, raucous in voice, breathed fire and fury into the frosty air.

Raggett, on the steps near the National Gallery, raved to a multitude of hearers, and no one dared to say him nay.

Presently, above his screaming tones, there came the sound of many voices chanting in the open air. Those who were standing on the steps on the west side of the square then saw a strange procession advancing slowly along Pall Mall East. A cornet-player, wearing a surplice, walked at the head of the procession, and the clear, strong notes of his instrument led the voices of a multitude of singers. A surpliced choir of quite a hundred men and boys was followed by the Sisters of the Kindly Life, and behind and around them came a mixed company of all classes, all ages, and both sexes—young men and maidens, old men and children. One and all rolled to the wintry skies a hymn of hope and triumph

that filled the people in the square with wonder and amaze.

At first there were some jeers and vulgar cries, and here and there a burst of scornful laughter in the crowd. But the quaint hymn of the ancient Church had such a lilt and cadence in its setting, that tender chords were touched in the hearts of thousands, and scorn and blasphemy were silenced. The people were irresistibly drawn into the flood of the melody. They caught eagerly at the cards which every one in the procession held out to those who wanted them.

“ ’Ere, let’s ’ave a card, lady,” said a husky voice at Aldwyth Westwood’s elbow.

“ Ain’t yer got a card for me, guv’nor ? ” came from every side.

Thus the volume of the song of triumph—discordant here and there, but earnest and full-throated—grew and strengthened as the band of singers advanced towards St Martin’s Church. Two banners floated in the air; the banner of the day—St Stephen’s, emblematic of his martyrdom; and the banner of the Holy Grail, emblazoned with the mystic Cup of Sacrifice. A jewelled cross gleamed high over all heads, and behind it, with clasped hands, walked Father Francis.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### BILLY'S MESSAGE

THERE were few London households in which Christmas had been "merry," and the lack of festive doings had necessarily extended to those who are of the roofless household of the streets. Billy of Mayfair, in his brief career, had had some "well-fed" Christmases—the roast beef of old England, solid slabs of plum pudding, with oranges and nuts to follow. Thanks to the spasmodic attention of kindly people, the boy's digestive machinery, which usually had very little to work upon, on those special occasions had been taxed to its utmost capacity. He had had one specially happy Christmas in hospital, and there lingered in his memory a song of goodly fare which all the little patients had been taught to sing in unison :

"Apple pies in Autumn,  
Currant pies in June ;  
Mince pies at Christmas,  
Coming very soon !"

The poetry of pie !

The staff-nurse said Billy had the sweetest voice in the ward. It had won him—coupled with his one-legged agility—great popularity with the young family of Joe the stableman, and he was the sole guest at their Christmas gathering in their rooms at the end of the mews. There was a goose for dinner—provided by Aldwyth Westwood—and other fare both rich and succulent. The savour thereof filled the small and inconvenient apartment, and with it was blended the odour proper to the mews itself. The preparation of such a meal taxed Mrs Joe's time and temper to the uttermost. She cooked the repast with an infinite amount of clatter, and then sat down to share it, nursing the while their youngest born, one Francis Joseph, of whom mention has been already made. Francis Joseph was fretful, and dominated the whole company—a truly imperial and imperious infant.

Joe, in his shirt-sleeves—he was never happy in a coat—expounded to Billy his strong objections to the motor-car. “Give me 'osses,” he growled; “when you've got an 'oss to deal with you know how to go to work; but them machines, snortin', and smellin', and tearin' all over the place—why, it's disgustin'!” Billy cordially agreed.



“What’ll happen when there ain’t no ’osses left in London, that’s what I want to know,” said Joe. Billy was unable to say. He didn’t know, and he said so.

But they were in full sympathy these two, always the best of friends. They were out together on Bank Holiday, and in the procession to Trafalgar Square were to be seen marching side by side.

None in that miscellaneous multitude sang more lustily than Joe and Billy. The stalwart stableman, card in hand, roared forth the glories of the Better Land, and Billy also, hopping through the snow and slush, trilled out in his clear boyish voice the wonders of the Golden City. Here, in the grim and sombre wilderness of bricks and mortar, they sang of heaven-built walls and pearly gates, of halls of Zion jubilant with praise, of mansions bright with saints and angels and all the martyred throng. Here, in the fading afternoon of London streets, they sang of a land where daylight is serene. Here, with no glimpse of the fadeless flowers of Paradise, they sang of the pastures of the blessed. Here, in the miserable garments of the poor, they sang of robes of white and crowns of glory.

Raggett, momentarily silenced by the swelling notes of the triumphant hymn, turned

round and glared upon the priest as the procession passed between him and the National Gallery. Half his meeting melted away, but, with gleaming eyes and fantastic gestures, he renewed his harangue and poured abuse and scorn upon the Church and all her works.

His violent language and gesticulations met with some success in stirring up the latent hostility of the baser sort among his hearers. Faces full of hate and brutality looked towards those who were gathered round the shining cross upon the steps of St Martin's. The fire was smouldering, and Raggett fanned it into flame.

"There's one of them," he shouted, with left hand extended; "one of 'the unco' guid!' Plenty to eat and drink; purple and fine linen to wear—all the good things of life to call his own. What does he care about Lazarus and his sores! They come into the streets singing about the heavenly kingdom. But, as I've told you in the Park, it's the rich who are to have it both ways—a good time here and the best places up above. Where do you come in? They give you stones, my friends, instead of bread—the stones of London. They've got their cellars full of wine, but they want to rob a poor man of his beer; yes, even on Bank Holiday. That's one of them that wants to do it. Why don't

you go and tell him what you think of him ? ”

A storm of groans and hisses burst from his hearers. A sodden-faced woman, passing a black bottle to her companion—a towering navvy, whose eyes were glazed with drink—yelled to Raggett between her raised hands : “ Right you are, mate ! right you are ! ” The navvy took a great pull at the bottle, and then swore freely and at large.

The hymn was ended with a sonorous “ Amen,” and only one voice was heard from the church steps—the voice of Father Francis, vibrant and clear. He was not preaching ; he was simply speaking to the people. The peculiar timbre and modulation of his voice made him audible to great numbers of the crowd, which now was growing denser and denser over the square and the converging streets. In simple language he carried on the theme of the finished hymn, telling the multitude of the Celestial City, the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. There, he said, the tired traveller would find a sweet and blessed country, the home of the elect ; the pastures of that country lay in glorious sheen, amid still waters and eternal bowers. There men would rest from their labours. Ended would be the dull, deep pain of earthly life and its constant anguish

of patience. But the happy people of that land would have high service to perform, tasks suited to an ennobled human nature. The land of the saints had its capital, a great, a glorious city, and the existence of a city implied community of life, activity, achievement. They, if they so willed, might become citizens of that wonderful capital. The gates were open and all might enter in whose names were written in the book of life. The nations of them that were saved would walk in the light of it. On the banks of the crystal river that flowed through the city there was the tree of life, and the leaves of that tree were for the healing of the nations. Healed by the leaves of that most blessed tree, the mortal would have put on immortality, henceforth to be a perfect being with a perfect life triumphant over sin and hell and death. That would be life indeed!—life for evermore; gladness without sorrow, health without a pang, light without darkness. The vigour of age would know no decay; beauty would not wither, nor would love grow cold. Such was the inheritance that humankind might enter into or reject—incorruptible, undefiled, never to fade away.

He paused, and with enraptured face gazed into the western sky, where now the sun was sinking amid vast ragged clouds. The

towering masses, fringed at first with silver, slowly broke and parted, taking the shapes of ramparts, towers, and pinnacles. A rose-red glow was spreading over all, and shafts of amber light seemed to stretch onward in the infinite, towards heavenly gates of pearl.

Aldwyth Westwood, gazing upward from the lower steps, saw in the face thus lighted from the west a look that awed her—a look she never could forget. Well might the witnesses of St Stephen's death have seen the face as of an angel when the Eastern mob ran with one accord upon the proto-martyr and took the life he valued but as dross. And, in some sort, the same passions that animated the people of two thousand years ago found expression in the London mob to-day. Raggett had not spoken in vain. Scowling men and unsexed women had been steadily forcing their way towards the church while Father Francis was speaking. Some of them threw stones and bits of mortar at the priest, and opprobrious cries came from every side. The crowd surged and swayed in fierce excitement. But Father Francis, his eyes still fixed upon the western light, seemed quite unconscious of attack or danger.

Joe steadied Billy as the pressure increased around them, and both looked round indignantly when the man and woman with the

bottle came pushing and lurching through the crowd behind them. Once more Father Francis was speaking.

“The promise,” he cried, “is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off.”

“’Ere, Bob, you have a shy,” said the reeling woman to her companion. She handed him the now empty bottle, and the man, grasping it by the neck, in a half drunken frenzy whirled it round his head. Women began to shriek and men to swear.

“It is written here—in this Book,” cried the priest in thrilling tones, as he held a Bible high above his head; “*and this is the Word of God!*”

Then the huge navvy, urged by the woman, “had a shy”; the bottle flew from his hand with deadly force; the Bible fell, and the face of Father Francis, ghastly and bleeding, sank back amongst those who stood around him on the steps. Billy saw it all, and, in an access of fury, balancing himself unaided for an instant, raised his crutch and struck the shoulder of the ruffian with all his force. With a savage oath the man half turned, and grasping the boy’s neck, hurled him forward with terrific violence upon the steps. In haste to escape, the people close at hand made a sudden rush. Some fell, their dead weight crushing the unhappy child against

the granite edge. Joe, with a tiger's swiftness and a loud cry of wrath, had sprung upon the boy's assailant. They wrestled, swayed, and fell, the woman clawing at the stableman, the crowd parting right and left in terror at the fury of the struggle.

But Billy of Mayfair lay very still at Aldwyth Westwood's feet.

Some one raised the boy a little, and they laid him gently on the stones. His face was pale with a pallor that Aldwyth had never seen before; his eyelids fluttered very faintly.

"My Gawd!" said a woman, peering forward, "the boy's done for. Where's a doctor? Ain't there no doctor here?"

"Stand back, can't you," cried another. "Give 'im some air."

Some one elbowed his way through the people, and bending over Billy, made a swift examination of his injuries. "Lungs," he said, tersely. "He's bleeding internally. Nothing to be done."

"Take 'im to the 'orspital," shouted a voice.

"He'll die before you get him there," muttered the doctor.

Aldwyth was kneeling now. Her left arm supported Billy as he lay; her right hand held his twitching fingers.

Azrael, Angel of Death, was drawing near.

"Billy," she said softly, "Billy." The



boy's eyes opened, and he smiled a startled smile.

Then, stooping, her face almost as white as his, she whispered in his ear the Sacred Name. The child gazed at her fixedly, questioningly.

"He died for you, Billy, and you are going to live with Him."

"Say it again," he panted, eagerly. Once more she said it.

The child sighed faintly. Had he heard? Azrael, Angel of Death, was very near.

"Dear Billy," she whispered once more, "He died for you, and you are going to live with Him."

Again his face was eager. "Please thank Him for me, mum. Please——"

The voice had died away.

Billy of Mayfair would speak no more. But, perchance, the Angel heard, and bore the message to Him who loves the children of our race.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE FATE OF PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD

ON the night of Bank Holiday, Londoners did not lack illumination. Gas and electric light had failed, but north and south, and east and west, the lurid glare of burning buildings filled the sky. Cries of "Fire! Fire!" in every quarter of the town brought pale, affrighted people from their houses to the roadways or the roofs. This added terror of wholesale arson stupefied the luckless householders. The fires—some said there were forty, fifty, sixty—had free play, for the extreme section of the Leaguers—now known as Raggett's Men—by concerted action, after dark, had rushed nearly all the stations of the Fire Brigade and forcibly removed the horses. The most destructive of these fires occurred in Bartholomew Close, where closely packed warehouses in yards and tortuous streets gave free scope to the spreading flames. At one time it was feared that the great hospital

itself would be involved, and the troops were ordered out to aid the civil power and keep some order among the excited crowds.

Brave deeds were done that night ; rescues effected in the face of almost certain death ; buildings pulled down and cut away to check the spreading of the conflagration. But without means of utilising the water supply, what had once been seized by fire burnt out to its cindered end. Strong military guards were ordered by the general commanding the Home District to the railway stations. Euston, St Pancras, and King's Cross remained intact. Paddington escaped with some damage to the goods department. Both the hotels and stations at Charing Cross and Cannon Street burst into flames almost simultaneously. The royal palaces suffered no injury. Incendiaries were caught red-handed, just in time, at the British Museum, and the better sort of people, now roused to retaliatory fury by these malignant acts, almost tore the offenders limb from limb.

London in its desperation found some courage. The quiet, orderly inhabitants had borne almost as much as could be borne. They realised, moreover, that yet worse things might happen unless the hydra-headed monster of disorder could be crushed. London might

starve. Meat, milk, vegetables would fail; all the necessaries of daily life might be cut off, if the railways should be blocked. Six millions, young and old, would be the almost helpless victims of the Leaguers. Those who had gone about the streets wearing the Spider as a talisman suddenly found that it was a dangerous sign. Right and left were heard loud curses on the League. Men began to see the full significance of the long-tolerated movement—a growing canker at the heart of the nation, which gave the nation's enemies without the very opportunity they had planned and watched and waited for. There was still some tough material in Englishmen; and if the authorities could not help them, they would help themselves. The tide began to turn. The giant was stirring. It had needed a galvanic shock to rouse his brain; and verily, the shock had come at last. It was, indeed, time to wake from sleep, and throw aside "the drowsy syrups of the world."

In that fiery, sleepless night, in many districts great numbers of the younger men of the better class banded themselves together, beating up recruits from house to house, and posting watchers to give warning of incendiary attempts. Armed with whatever weapons they could find, they systematically patrolled the streets. Shouts of "Down with the

Leaguers !” burst out from time to time, and women and children, peeping and cowering behind the window-blinds, gathered hope and courage. At last the men of London had been roused !

But the flames were still licking and curling round many a house and public building. All night the wind was rising to a gale ; the cloud wrack flew across the reddened sky. As the tardy hour of dawn drew near, strange pallid people with fantastic gestures—hatless, oddly-clad—came wandering through the streets. Raggett had freed his friends. The Leaguers had let loose hundreds of the lunatics of London !

Seventy miles away a yet more deadly wound was being inflicted on the British nation. About five o'clock on the morning of Christmas Day two terrific explosions in quick succession roused the inhabitants of the little Hampshire town of Havant and the surrounding villages. Great numbers of Portsmouth people also heard it, but, of course, more faintly. When, later on, it became known that a fire had broken out in the Royal dockyard it was assumed by many that the sounds of explosion must have come from the same quarter. Every thought was concentrated on this appalling catastrophe, the full extent of which was only to be

gradually realised. But, all the time, the great naval yard, Britain's pride and strong tower against the enemy, was fast becoming one gigantic furnace. The grip of all-devouring fire grew deadlier every hour. This many-acred hive of naval industry, the factory of the wooden walls of England, dating from King John, and now the birthplace and the nursery of the armoured giants of the deep, was crumbling into dust and ashes. The docked ships, ships' stores, and armament, that stood for millions of the nation's money, needed for national defence, roared into flame and blackened into cinders.

The seven thousand dockyard men of course were keeping holiday. Many of the high officials were away on leave, and those few guardians of the yard who were supposed to be keeping watch and ward regarded their duty as perfunctory. What was likely to happen there, or anywhere, on Christmas Day? Perhaps some of those intelligent foreigners who had been permitted to inspect the yard from time to time—intelligent emulators of Jack the Painter—could have answered the question. By-and-by, of course there would be a most strict and searching Government inquiry—expert evidence, red tape, blue-books, and all the rest of it. Meanwhile, the great fire burned on—freely and furiously.

Soon after the alarm was given the seamen from the Whale Island Barracks, and many from the ships in harbour, with a strong force of marines from Forton, came pouring into the dockyard, but only to make a terrible discovery. Of what avail a thousand willing hands—of what use all the activity and resource of British seamen, when the one element with which the fire could be fought and conquered was not available? The water supply had failed! At first, and, indeed, for some time, the real reason was not understood, for the pumping station of the Havant water-works was eight miles away. Then the appalling truth was realised—the explosions explained; the great engines, those in use and those in reserve, had been shattered by dynamite in the darkness of the previous night. The Royal dockyard was left to the mercy of the flames. All day, and all the night that followed, they raged and roared. Red ruin and destruction—almost without restraint—spread on every side.

The Portsmouth Hard was packed with horrified spectators. The townspeople in excited throngs ran to all the dockyard gates, and in the poorer districts surrounding the great wall enclosing the extension works, every roof was loaded with awe-stricken watchers of the conflagration.



The church steeples of the town stood out to view in blended clouds and smoke, illumined with a fiery glow; the gilded ship on the tower of Portsmouth parish church seemed to be sailing in a sea of fire. Disaster followed on the heels of horror. In the midst of the great calamity a rending explosion took place in the vast powder magazine at Priddy's Hard,—on the Gosport side.

The harbour was now so unsafe for shipping that orders were given to remove all ships as far as possible. Among the large vessels alongside the dockyard jetty was the *Carisbrooke Castle*, a South-African liner which had lately been chartered by the Admiralty to serve as an auxiliary scout with a Flying Squadron then lying at Spithead. The *Carisbrooke* had been brought round from Southampton and was taking in a quantity of stores; but the danger of her position made it advisable to get her clear of the harbour without delay. Just when she was abreast of Blockhouse Fort an explosion—accidental or designed, none knew—occurred on board. The great ship, viewed by the flashlight from the fort, was seen to heel over. In half an hour she had settled down, blocking the fairway, and effectually bottling the harbour against all craft of heavy tonnage.

On the Gosport side the shore was lined with

lookers on. From this side, indeed, looking across the water, the sight was exceptionally striking, for the far-spread glow lit up the towering masts and rigging of the *Victory* and all the ships in port.

From the tower of the old Norman castle at Portchester, away beyond the mudbanks of the harbour, and on the crumbling walls that flanked its water-gate, the villagers gazed spellbound at the awesome sight. Farther away, on the long ridge of Portsdown Hill, the rural population of the district had a yet more impressive view of what was happening. To them it seemed as if the whole town of Portsmouth must be wrapped in flames.

Here, on the chalk down, stood a solitary pillar, erected long years ago to the memory of Nelson. Grey, moss-grown, and mournful, it looked down on scenes with which the great sea-captain once had been so familiar.—Southsea Common, where a “blackguard horse” ran away with him; the Sally Port, where his sailors always were coming or going; the old nooks and alleys of “Point,” where the press-gang did its work; the old George Inn, in which he breakfasted on the morning of his last embarkation; the spot on the beach, marked by the anchor of the *Victory*, where the people grasped his hand and, weeping, bade him a final Godspeed;

and there, in the light of the burning dockyard, rode the brave old ship in which he died for England.

More than a hundred years had passed away, and now the Royal dockyard, that had equipped so many fleets for the greatest of Britannia's admirals, lay engulfed and wrecked in a tremendous, rolling sea of flame and smoke.

Portsmouth, for all purposes of naval warfare, was out of action.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE NAVAL BATTLE OFF PLYMOUTH

THUS the chronicler : “ The Spanish Invasion being brought to a crisis, after the most assiduous application of three whole years to fit out that fleet vainly named by the Pope the great, noble and invincible Armada and Terror of Europe. . . . King Philip gave orders for its sailing on the 19th of May 1588. It consisted of 134 sail of tall towering ships, besides gallies, galliasses and galleons.” The fleet carried 8766 mariners, 21,855 soldiers, and 2088 galley slaves ; together, 32,709 men, irrespective of Spanish Dons and their attendants, priests, surgeons, and servants of all sorts.

First, and before all things, it was to be understood that the motives of his Spanish Majesty were truly religious—“ to serve God, and to return unto his Church a great many contrite souls . . . oppressed by heretics, enemies to our Holy Catholic Faith.”

Britain, as usual, was unready; but a fleet was got together in only 50 days. The City of London being desired to furnish 5000 men and 15 ships, provided 10,000 men and 30 ships, and at this great crisis in our national life there was "such a zealous love and duty throughout the nation towards the Queen as is inexpressible." Britons were Britons in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth; "an uncommon joy and alacrity appeared in the face of every one. They were pleased with the thought of contributing, every man in his way, towards the defence of their country, their liberties, and their Queen."

The English fleet consisted of 80 ships manned by 9000 sailors, and not all those were available when the Armada was sighted off the Lizard, disposed in a crescent seven miles long from horn to horn; but when the Spanish admiral got back to Spain in late September he had but 60 sail out of his 134. Thus, with the loss of only one small ship and about a hundred men, England remained the mistress of the seas. Shame, loss, and dishonour had befallen her treacherous enemy. *Venit, Vidit, Fugit!*

And now, three hundred and twenty-two years after the winds and the waves had come to the aid of England, another fleet of vastly different character had been sighted from

the Lizard—insignificant, relatively, in point of numbers, but immeasurably more powerful in type and armament. And once again a British fleet came out from Plymouth, to watch and, if need were, to fight the foreigner.

After the first and unexpected appearance of the German battleships and cruisers off Plymouth—made known to London by the special *Epoch* on Christmas Day—certain mysterious manœuvres followed. But when eager observations were taken early on the morning of Bank Holiday, not one German ship remained in view. Phantom-like the fleet had come, phantom-like it had vanished in the dark and stormy night.

Meanwhile, to the intense relief of Plymouth, another British Squadron hove in sight. Signals and messages were rapidly exchanged, and certain cruisers and destroyers were at once detached for scouting work—their duty being “to track the Germans, shadow them cautiously, and send back news by wireless telegraphy of their latest movements.” The scouts, in turn, were lost to view. Their orders were to cruise along an east and west line some fifty miles from land, to meet twice a day, exchange reports, and then return in opposite directions to the limits of their beat.

At sunset the battleships and cruisers re-

maining at Plymouth went to general quarters, and the crews were kept at their guns during the night. Every officer and bluejacket felt the tension of the hour. None knew what test of courage, skill, endurance the night or the morning might exact from them. The honour of the Flag, the responsibility of upholding great traditions, the safety of their country might suddenly be entrusted to their keeping. The scene might well inspire English hearts. For all remembered that hither came in those far-off days the mighty fleets of Spain in the period of her power; and, again, it was out yonder in the misty sea that once upon a time the Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, flaunted his flag—jacks and pennants flying—in the face of the fiery Blake, who accepted the defiance and at once attacked and beat the Dutchman's ships. The older navies of the kings and queens of England had known how to exact the salutation of the Flag. And Cromwell, too, had known. For in a treaty of his time it was provided "that the ships of the United Provinces, as well those fitted out for war as others, which should meet in the British seas any of the ships of war of England, should strike their flag and lower their topsail in such manner as had been any time practised before under any former Governments." Sir Cloudesley Shovel and Sir George Rooke—



they, too, had exacted homage to the Flag when Queen Anne was on the throne; and no foreign navy had ventured to withhold the first salutation in the long reign of Queen Victoria.

To the navy of King Edward VII., in this supreme moment, was committed the maintenance of our marine supremacy.

Yet experienced officers were well aware that, with all the foresight and sagacity that could be brought to bear, the fortune of war at sea depended very much on what men still called chance. "Right or left," said Nelson, "it is all a matter of guess, and the world attributes wisdom to him who guesses right." Nelson himself had to hunt for the French fleet many a time and oft; the American fleet had no news of the Spanish ships for something like a fortnight in the fight for Cuba; and in the war between Russia and Japan, the fleet of the former was "a dark horse" to Admiral Togo for considerable periods. The game of wits at sea, for which the other term is naval strategy, depends on distances, the elements, the unforeseen. Specific programmes are impossible, and the best-laid plans of admirals "gang oft agley." Thus it came about that in this critical juncture the British scouts failed to get in touch with the potential enemy,

—a failure almost attended with dire results for England.

The Germans having given our scouts the slip (whether by luck or skill was never known) crept back in the dark hours towards Plymouth. Then, suddenly, their whole flotilla of destroyers, with lights out, and steaming at full speed, made a desperate attempt to force an entrance to the harbour. The rush was admirably planned. Anticipating partial detection, and by means of clever feints, the torpedo craft sought to attract the searchlights of the defence works to one particular destroyer, hoping that the main division might thus be enabled to make a successful dash, under the shadow of the shore, to the eastern and western channels of the breakwater. But the manœuvre failed. In the very nick of time the flashlights exposed the real and formidable nature of the onslaught. The roar of the battery guns burst forth upon the night, continuing with unabated fury until all but one of the flotilla—which ran headlong upon the breakwater—were sunk or driven off, damaged and defeated. The projected supplementary action of the German battle-ships, now looming into view, thus became hopeless, if not impossible.

A mighty cheer went up from all the British ships when this was realised. It was their

turn now to take the warpath, and the Admiral,—Sir Lambert Meade,—saw that they took it instantly. In the hearts of all, if not upon their lips, was the spirit of the stirring English war-song :

“Who fears to die? Who fears to die?  
Is there any here who fears to die

Shout for England!  
Ho! for England!  
George for England!  
Merry England!  
England for aye!”

Daylight was near at hand, and when it came, grey and mournful, over the sullen sea, the tactics of the British admiral left the enemy in doubt. An elaborate feint made with certain British battleships and armoured cruisers led the Germans to suppose the intention was to drive them back into the Atlantic; and ere they realised their error, the greater number of the British ships steamed diagonally outside the enemy, enclosing them within an imaginary line drawn from the Eddystone to Lizard Point. The light cruisers were told off to harass the German auxiliaries, and seeing the probable effect of this manœuvre, the enemy opened fire, wasting powder and shell long before they were within effective range. The British guns, however, remained

silent until the distance between the fleets was only four miles or less. Then the British admiral gave the signal, and straightway four battleships and eight armoured cruisers hurled shell after shell against the nearest of the German ships. The detached section of the fleet that had steamed westward along the coast, attacked with equal fury the other wing of the invaders' line. The Germans at first replied with spirit. In every battle the winning cock must lose some feathers, and sorrow and mourning were on their way to many an English home.

Presently there were signs of disaster and disablement among the enemy's ships. Caught between two fires, and deprived of the aid of their destroyers, the position produced a demoralising effect upon their men. The German plan of campaign had miscarried, and the crews and gunners were at first disconcerted and then thrown into panic by the concentrated and mathematical precision with which the British guns riddled the leading ships of their column. Here and there, in both fleets, the bursting shells produced wholesale slaughter and mutilation. The worst disasters to the enemy's ships, however, were caused by the repeated shocks of the terrific projectiles, which displaced the steel plates of their armour. Thus the rivets sprang, and

water crept in at a hundred holes. Two of the finest German battleships, through the gaining weight of water, had their centre of gravity gradually shifted. They foundered, and all hands were lost—officers and men going bravely, calmly, to their doom.

The battleship *Wilhelm II.* became unmanageable and left the line, and, at the same time it was seen that desperate attempts were being made to give protection to one in particular of the auxiliaries—a liner of great speed, that presently broke away and headed for the open sea, hotly pursued by two light cruisers and one destroyer from the British line.

Both remaining sections of the defending force now closed in upon the Germans, their great guns doing more and deadlier work as the range was lessened. One of the German battleships was now on fire, and the great clouds of smoke that rose for a time so hid the ships that firing was suspended. When the smoke cleared the British admiral gave another signal, and then the deadly wasps of naval warfare—the torpedo flotilla—swarmed in upon the enemy to complete the havoc and destruction commenced by the great guns of our battleships.

England, sovereign of the seas, had won another victory. Her flag was still supreme!

The scattered units of the German fleet had not only to seek safety from their pursuers, but also, as the short day closed in, to battle with a formidable gale. For the *Schiller* and other ships that had steamed westward, the position was one of appalling jeopardy. They had to reckon with the terrors of a wild and rocky shore.

Less than three hundred miles from London, the westerly extremity of England, grey and granitic, frowns on the roaring seas that beat in vain upon its rocky bastions. Here the channels mingle with the mighty ocean, and stupendous billows, tumbling shoreward, break on the cliffs with a terrific roar that sometimes daunts the hardened miner at work in the galleries that stretch beneath the ocean-bed. A little more than a mile from the cliffs the Longship's Lighthouse throws its rays upon the spume of the tremendous waves, and away to the west lies the granite group of the Scilly Isles.

The wind and the rain are twin rulers of these islands; and the yeasty currents have swept many a gallant ship upon their jagged reefs. The "Bishop" and his "Clerks" are always on the watch to shrive the souls of shipwrecked mariners. It was here on the Gilstone Rock (near the small islet of Roseviar) that Sir Cloudesley Shovel, returning

from the siege of Toulon, met with his tragic end. Driven off his course by storms, his ship, the *Association*, was forced upon the rock, and in a few minutes fell to pieces. In that night of dreadful memory, the *Phœnix*, the *Romney*, and the *Firebrand* met a like fate. The *St George* only narrowly escaped. Upwards of 2000 lives were lost in that dread night, and since that far-off time many another ship has gone to pieces in those hungry jaws.

It was around these ragged westerly islands that the storm raged with especial fury on the night that followed the scattering of the German fleet.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### MARCUS WHITE AND THE MOB

WITH that mocking perversity which confutes the weatherwise, the frost and bitter wind had given place to heavy rainstorms. The wind, veering round to south-west late on Boxing Day, blew with an ever-growing force and fury, and made the night of December 26th one of terrible memory for many years to come. In London and Westminster alone a million pounds' worth of damage resulted from the tempest, and the tale of ships wrecked and lives lost all round the coast was only to be told later on and by instalments.

The traffic on nearly every railway was now disorganised, and a strike of the railway men had become imminent. The cutting of telegraph wires by the Leaguers had already gone far to keep Londoners in ignorance of momentous events happening outside the metropolitan area, and the great storm almost

completed the work the Leaguers had left unfinished. But the partial isolation of the great town in other respects, and particularly the threatened dearth of food supplies, constituted a yet further cause of apprehension. Early on the morning of the 27th, the provision shops were besieged by people of all ranks, eager to lay in stores of every description—meat, vegetables, groceries, bread, and every kind of household necessaries. In many cases it became a raid, in which some paid monstrous prices, while in the scramble others secured provisions without paying for them at all. Great numbers of shops and stores were wholly cleared of stock, tradesmen and their assistants being overpowered, while customers hurrying homewards were frequently waylaid, maltreated, and robbed of their purchases. The tumult and excitement in the streets became appalling. Military patrols were now seen in some of the principal thoroughfares, but not in sufficient numbers to maintain good order. Here and there a band of hooligans, who smashed all the street lamps as they passed, were chased by troopers, but they generally escaped into side streets and alleys, and resumed their work of destruction in another quarter. Shutters were closed, and boarded windows met the eye in all directions. Wild rumours

went round. There were, it was said, barricades at the West End. Martial law would be declared before the day was out. Stories were told of disaffection among the troops at Aldershot; of a night muster on Ascot Heath and a march through Windsor Great Park to the Castle. Another organised mob was reported to have assembled at Grange Wood, near Croydon, marching thence, with increasing swarms of adherents, through Camberwell, Walworth, and Lambeth, making, as some said, for the Archbishop's Palace, or, as others declared, for the Houses of Parliament.

The truth, and the whole truth could not be ascertained, but in all the passion and excitement of the hour, scarcely a word of disloyalty was breathed of the King individually. On the contrary, the vast majority believed that, but for the illness which lately had prevented his Majesty from taking an active part in the affairs of State, his tact and courage would have remedied existing evils before they had come to such a dangerous head.

The dangers of civil conflict were greatly augmented by the strong and avowed resentment that had at last broken forth against the tyranny of the Leaguers; and this peril in turn was accentuated by splits in the ranks

of the Leaguers themselves. The proximate cause of the schism was found in the *Epoch*, which, appearing in the streets about midday, contained a remarkable article, printed prominently in leaded type. In effect, the writer declared in forcible language that though he had no cause to love England, he would fight side by side with Englishmen rather than see her trodden under the iron heel of Germany or any other continental nation. Eschewing the cautious language of the average leader-writer, he roundly stated that there was a deadly conspiracy developing in certain of the chancelleries of Europe. He warned Great Britain to beware lest her enemies, by a swift and sudden stroke, should lay her, fettered, in the dust. There would soon be news, he said, of the doings of the powerful German squadron in the south and west, and of a dual fleet, Russian and German, in the North Sea. These were but the vanguard of an enormous fleet of transports, prepared in sections in various German ports, and designed to land 100,000 foreign soldiers on our shores.

Then came a great surprise. This, said the writer, was the last time the *Epoch* would appear.

The article was signed, "Marcus White," and his last warning words to the nation

were those written by a laureate of England half a century before :

“Form ! form ! Riflemen form !  
Ready, be ready to meet the storm !”

The article produced at first a staggering effect upon the Leaguers, and the extreme section, led by Raggett, but consisting mainly of foreign anarchists, vowed vengeance on the leader who they swore had betrayed and hindered them in the moment of impending triumph. A vast and threatening mob gathered on the Embankment, and crash after crash of broken glass startled the neighbourhood. A beast-like roar went up when Marcus White came forward to a window and looked down upon the crowd.

It was as he stood thus, with folded arms, that Aldwyth Westwood and Herrick entered the room, unannounced in the confusion of the moment. But Marcus White turned instantly, and the same swift look of recognition that Aldwyth remembered noticing in the Folkestone hotel came into his eyes as he gazed at her. Her own eyes were strained and sad ; but, though her face was very pale, there was courage and firmness in its expression.

She spoke at once : “ I have come to ask you about my father’s safety.”

For a moment Marcus White gazed from her face to her companion's, answering nothing.

"Why should it be supposed that I am Sir John Westwood's keeper?" he asked quietly.

Herrick broke in: "It is known that you had a strong personal hostility to Miss Westwood's father, and that a monstrous outrage has been committed, in which you——"

Marcus White raised his hand. "You are not addressing a Court of Law," he said scornfully.

"I wish to Heaven I were!" answered the barrister hotly. "And, more than that, I wish you were standing in the dock, where you ought to be."

Aldwyth laid her hand entreatingly on her lover's arm.

"What has this to do with Sir John Westwood?" asked Marcus White, almost indifferently.

Aldwyth stepped forward. "I ask you this question: Is my father alive?"

"Miss Westwood," was the slow answer, "I cannot tell you."

"You will be called to account for this," said Herrick sternly.

A roar arose from the mob below the window.

"I am being called to account for many things," said Marcus White, listening, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

“Are you mad?” cried Herrick.

The other laughed bitterly. “Perhaps I am. I have played for a great stake and I won the trick, but”—glancing towards the broken windows—“I may not win the rubber.”

“Do you refuse to give us any information?” It was Aldwyth who spoke now.

“No, I don’t refuse. Your father and those who were with him were left to the mercy of that God in whose name they administer law and justice in this country. Can you complain of that?” He looked at Herrick as he spoke.

“What do you mean?” asked Aldwyth breathlessly.

“Miss Westwood, can those who are entrusted with the quality of mercy towards their fellow-creatures—can they complain if they are left to the mercy of the elements?”

“It is madness and worse than madness—murder!” said Herrick, stepping forward.

“You have courage,” answered Marcus White, regarding him. “Perhaps,” he added significantly, “that is why you have been spared.”

“But my father!” interrupted Aldwyth. “What is to be done?”

Heedless of the tumult without, Marcus White advanced to the table and sat down. He wrote a few lines rapidly. “If you take



this to the Admiralty," he said, "they may be able to get you a report; or, better still, go to the Foreign Secretary. He is more likely to be able to give you information." He folded the paper and gave it into Aldwyth's hands.

"Let us go at once," she said, turning to Herrick.

As she spoke a great stone came hurtling through the window and smashed the mirror over the mantelpiece. Heavy blows were heard upon a door below. A white-faced, breathless clerk burst into the room. "The mob are threatening to break down the outer door," he said.

"I am afraid," said White quietly, looking at Herrick, "you have brought Miss Westwood at an awkward moment."

But she answered for herself. "It was I who insisted on coming."

"I will see that you are not molested," was White's reply. He paused a moment. More stones came flying through the windows. There was a sharp crack of firearms, and a bullet shattered the great chandelier in the middle of the ceiling. Marcus White crossed quickly to the door; the frightened clerk drew aside and watched him anxiously.

"Great heavens! where are you going?" asked Herrick.

“ Outside, to face these curs.”

“ It is not safe, sir ; there'll be murder done,” cried the affrighted clerk.

But White ignored him. “ Keep Miss Westwood here for a few moments,” he said to Herrick, speaking in clear, emphatic tones. “ Then you will be able to get away in safety. When you hear me fire,” he drew a shining revolver from his pocket, “ go—at once !”

Without another word, and bare-headed as he was, he passed out of the room. They stood in breathless suspense until a hoarse yell of execration came from the street, attaining increased violence and menace as it was taken up by the greater crowd on the Embankment.

An irresistible impulse hurried them to the window. Surrounded by a small bodyguard of adherents, Marcus White was seen, forcing his way across the road. Fists and sticks were shaken at him on every side, and vile epithets in half a dozen languages fouled the air as the human wedge drove through the clamouring, struggling mass and reached the pavement on the river side of the Embankment. The next moment he was standing on the parapet, looking down with dauntless eyes upon the sea of furious faces that was now turned towards him. His voice rang out above the uproar.

“Fools! fools, that you are, listen!”

The mob responded with a howl of wrath.

“Traitor!” cried Raggett, shrill above the din; “Traitor!” and the vast excited multitude took up the cry, yelling it with indescribable ferocity.

The gleam of a revolver caught the eye. There were those who thought he fired above their heads. Others believed the shot was meant for Raggett.

At any rate it was the promised signal; but Aldwyth and Herrick stood for a moment, held by the overmastering excitement of the scene. Then, with savage curses and screams of fury the mob rushed at the parapet, reckless in their rage. Some clambered up; others fell and were trampled under foot. Swaying and reeling, gripped and torn on either side, Marcus White for a moment held his ground.

Covering her eyes, and with a low cry of horror, Aldwyth turned from the window now, and in a moment, supported by Herrick, she had reached the street.

Close at hand, in Howard Street, the Westwoods' carriage, a closed landau, was waiting.

“Quick, to Berkeley Square,” cried Herrick.

Aldwyth sank back against the cushions, almost fainting, as the horses plunged forward under the sharp lash of the driver's whip.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE FOREIGN SECRETARY

LORD DOWNLAND'S private secretary shook his head.

"My dear fellow, it is impossible," he said. "I'd manage it for *you* if it could be done for any one; you know that well enough."

Herrick did know it, for the speaker and he were first cousins, and good friends.

"It's of vital importance," he said earnestly.

"A matter of life and death," urged Aldwyth.

"Look here, Langdale"—Herrick laid his hand on the other's arm—"we come from Marcus White."

"Marcus White!" The secretary drew back, amazed, and looked from Herrick's face to Aldwyth's. "You mean the head-centre of the Leaguers?"

"Yes; but they've rounded on him."

"Only a few moments ago, when we left him, he was fighting for his life," said Aldwyth.

“It’s horrible, but it’s a fact,” added Herrick; “they were on him like a pack of wolves.”

“That’s news, indeed!” Langdale looked very grave.

“We have here something that he wrote for us to give into Lord Downland’s hands. It bears on the safety of Miss Westwood’s father, and perhaps on special foreign news which his lordship ought to know.”

“I’ll see what can be done,” said Langdale briskly. “The French ambassador is with the marquis just at this moment; and, as you see, the brougham is at the door. There’s no harm in saying”—he lowered his voice slightly—“that the chief’s on the point of starting for Windsor, by the King’s command. But I’ll try to manage it for you.” And he quickly left the room.

Over the window blind they could see the electric brougham, ready and waiting to start. Two or three uniformed policemen stood near at hand. Farther off, Herrick caught sight of his old acquaintance, Henshaw; and, at the same time, the rattle of accoutrements attracted his notice to a cavalry escort waiting at the north end of the square.

Suddenly Henshaw moved quickly out of view. There was whispering among the uniformed men, who wore a watchful, anxious look.

Something untoward was happening, and the barrister looked round intending to attract Aldwyth's attention; but she was sitting at the table, her elbows resting there, and her face covered with her hands. He did not speak to her. Tact taught him that she was better left alone. He believed that in the complex trouble she was suffering she was no longer indifferent to his deep and constant affection; and it was true. Thus does the shaking of our lives sometimes restore the balance. A strong man's love; a life-companion, tender, true, and kind! Happy the woman who can win the prize. Aldwyth, at least, was learning to be grateful; and gratitude, like pity, is akin to love.

When Herrick glanced through the window again, Henshaw, usually most deliberate in his movements, was hurrying past; but his quick eyes had caught sight of the barrister, and the next moment he rang the bell. There was a hurried conversation with the hall porter; then a footman brought in a hasty note written on a leaf torn from a pocket-book:

*"Can I see you for a moment? Urgent."*

Herrick, with a word to Aldwyth, who still seemed to be stunned by recent events, went

out, and was shown into a small anteroom, to which the detective quickly followed him.

“What is it?” he asked, wonderingly.

“Well, it may be much and it may be nothing; I can’t explain now—but, look here, sir, that carriage out there is waiting for you and the lady, isn’t it?”

“Yes; they’re Sir John Westwood’s horses.”

“Do you mind if the Marquis goes off in that carriage instead of in the brougham that’s waiting for him?”

“You must have some special reason for suggesting that!”

“I have,”—emphatically.

“I’ll ask Miss Westwood,—it’s not my carriage.”

“One moment—need you ask? Ladies want explanations, and there isn’t time to give them.”

“My good sir, you can hardly expect——”

“Take it upon yourself, sir,” interrupted the police officer, impressively. “It may save life—a valuable life, too. I know what I’m talking about, and if any harm comes to Sir John’s horses, you may be pretty sure it is a case in which the Government will make the damage good.”

“Very well; do what you think right. I see there is something serious in the wind.”



“Right you are, sir”; and the detective was out of the room and the house before another word could be said.

As Herrick crossed the hall to return to Aldwyth Westwood, the private secretary met him.

“Ah, here you are! The ambassador’s gone. Now if you want three words with the marquis before he leaves, come this way. But where is Miss Westwood?”

“Here,” said Herrick, opening the door.

Aldwyth rose instantly, and the two followed the secretary to Lord Downland’s library. The Foreign Secretary stood upon the hearth-rug. A valet was helping him to put on his travelling coat. At a sign the man retired, and Langdale, after a low-toned word or two to his chief, placed a chair for Aldwyth and also left the room.

It was obvious that his lordship was in great haste to get away.

Herrick, without a word, put Marcus White’s written message in the minister’s hand. Lord Downland glanced at it rapidly, then read it carefully again. A shade of colour came into his pale, thin cheeks.

He looked up. “This news was partly known to me,” he said, “but not quite all. The rest may be very valuable.” He glanced for a second at the fire, then added: “This

leader of the Leaguers seems to have some love for England, or, at any rate, some scruples, after all. But he will have to pay a heavy penalty for his misdeeds."

"Lord Downland," said Aldwyth quietly, "I think he has paid the last of all penalties already."

The Foreign Minister looked at her quickly, with grave inquiring eyes.

"My lord," said Herrick, "the Leaguers have turned on him. We left Marcus White at the mercy of the mob."

"Ah! is that so? A terrible experience for Miss Westwood. But I have intelligence that will relieve her of a great anxiety—Sir John Westwood is safe."

"Safe! thank God for that!" cried Aldwyth, with clasped hands.

"All on board were safe. It was almost a miracle. The steamer could not have floated for another hour, and," he added, significantly, "she was discovered drifting towards the Race of Alderney, deserted by her captain and the crew. A monstrous outrage!—monstrous!"

"Then Sir John—all of them—must be on their way to London now," exclaimed Herrick.

"No," said the marquis quietly. "They are safe, but at present they are not on their way to England. They were picked up

by a German cruiser; and our relations with Germany at the present moment are not friendly." A faint half-smile flickered over his face. "It is what a former colleague of mine would call 'a sort of a war!'" Lord Downland took up his hat and moved towards the door.

"Your lordship means that they are prisoners?"

"Yes, Mr Herrick. But there is no need for alarm," with a reassuring glance towards Aldwyth. "England also has a prisoner—one of very great distinction. At this moment he is on his way by special train from Penzance to Windsor Castle."

On each side of the entrance to Mount Street, as the carriage approached with the Foreign Minister on his way to Paddington, small groups were loitering. The men, for the most part, had the look of foreigners. Three things were vividly recalled later on—one of them, that the officer in command of the cavalry escort sent two troopers ahead; secondly, that, on seeing this, Henshaw ran forward with a loud cry of warning; thirdly, that a shrill whistle was heard as the troopers, followed rapidly by the carriage, approached the turning into Mount Street.

Then, swiftly following on the whistle,

there was a blue flash in the air, and a sharp, cracking detonation. The leading troopers were scattered, one of the horses plunged and fell with a crash upon the pavement, throwing its rider heavily against a doorstep. The troopers' horses in rear of the carriage reared and plunged; a scream came from some women who were near, and a young girl, shockingly mutilated, fell bleeding to the ground.

The bomb had struck the roadway between the leading troopers and the carriage horses, but, as if by a miracle, the latter, though terrified, were uninjured, and tore through Mount Street at a gallop.

Behind them, on the right-hand pavement a struggling group was seen. Henshaw, whose device had been defeated by the misconceived movement of the troopers, had darted on a sallow-faced man with a short black beard. The man fought like a wild beast in the detective's grip, but the uniformed police had hurried to the scene, and one of the most powerful — it was P.C. Dormer — enveloped the dynamitard in his arms, while others went in hot pursuit of his fleeing confederates.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE EAGLE IN THE LION'S JAWS

THE strike of compositors which had maddened the conductors of daily journals proved to be a blessing in disguise. Such stirring news had come to hand that a few hours' delay in publishing the morning papers were worth all the terms that trades unions could exact—and more also. The morning papers of December 27th became afternoon papers, and they went off like wildfire.

Indeed there was news that staggered humanity :

Item One :—The death of Marcus White by drowning in the Thames—with the murderous clutch of Raggett and another Leaguer still on his throat. And this, it was recognised, meant not only the death of three men—it was the death-blow of the League itself.

Item Two :—The direful catastrophe at Portsmouth dockyard, with all that it meant, and might have meant, for England.

Item Three :—The treacherous night attack of the Germans at Plymouth, so happily detected, and the subsequent victory of the British fleet.

Item Four :—Failure of a projected joint movement by the German and the Russian fleets in the North Sea.

The stars in their courses had “fought against Sisera.” The concerted action of the combined squadrons had come to naught, partly because of the delay and blundering of the Russian admiral ; mainly by reason of the terrible storm which swept the sea and thundered on our shores on that eventful night.

Battered and beaten by the tempest, the invading ships had made all haste to return to port. Once again, as in the days of Queen Elizabeth, “God blew, and they were scattered !”

But the heaviest stroke of misfortune suffered by the enemy was not inflicted in the North Sea. The remnant of the German Squadron of the south, seeking to escape from its pursuers, had found the flying squadron despatched from Spithead completely barring their passage in the Straits of Dover. The British crews were fresh and fit, burning for battle. But once again in the history of nations discretion was acknowledged to be

the better part of warfare. The Germans were not now in force or condition to show fight. Every ship fell into the hands of the British admiral, and was promptly interned in Dover harbour.

There yet remained a startling postscript to this tremendous news. The *Schiller*, pursued by the British cruiser *Cadmus* and the destroyer *Hornet*, on the 26th had made desperate efforts to escape capture. Driven to the west in the darkness and the storm, the liner made a rash attempt to double back between her pursuers and the Scilly Islands. The result was fatal. Too late, the commander of the *Schiller* discovered his dangerous proximity to the "Bishop and his Clerks." A terrific wave swept the great liner like a plaything on the deadly rocks. There came another mighty, shattering rush of water that drowned the captain and swept a passenger, who stood beside him in that awful moment, clear of the ship and far up on the tangled seaweed of the rocks.

So hot and close was the pursuit of the *Cadmus* and the *Hornet* that they, too, narrowly escaped similar disaster. The *Cadmus* was not half a mile to windward when the *Schiller* went ashore. The *Hornet*, nearer in, only escaped by being refloated on the first great wave that drowned the *Schiller's* lights.



Of all on board the German liner only the one passenger was saved. This passenger, bruised, exhausted, with a broken arm, received the prompt and kindly attention of the coastguard. Little did these rough but sympathetic folk suspect the exalted rank and dignity of the sufferer. He seemed to be a foreigner, but knew much more of the King's English than was known to the humble islanders themselves. When the stranger gave them a massive gold ring, set with a brilliant stone, by way of parting gift, these good folk began to think they had entertained an angel unawares.

In truth they had ministered, not to an angel—but to an emperor.

The skipper of the Trinity steamer that conveyed the stranger to St Mary's Island for temporary surgical treatment was a man who had seen many illustrated newspapers. Though at first incredulous, he thought he recognised the illustrious foreigner. He was quite sure of it before the steamer left St Mary's for Penzance with the passenger on board.

Lord Downland, as the reader is aware, knew who the stranger was before his lordship left Berkeley Square—to run the gauntlet of the bomb brigade—on his way to Windsor Castle.

The prisoner of England was none other than Kaiser William, King of Prussia, German Emperor.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE KING AND THE KAISER

LONDON went mad when all the news was known—mad with amazement, relief, anger, joy: amazement at the deadly reality of the national danger that had been averted; relief at the safety of England; anger with the

“New majesties of mighty States”—

that, with “great contrivances of power,” had sought to encompass our inviolable island.

And there was joy—delirious, exuberant—that the hydra-headed mob no longer held the field in London.

The main thoroughfares were densely packed with shouting multitudes. In the sharp reaction of the moment, in the complex excitement occasioned by the news, people laughed and wept and sang. Social distinctions were broken down; the gloved hands of cultured women were given gladly

into the grip of the grimmest workmen. Men and women of every rank exchanged greetings and congratulations. Everywhere it was "Rule Britannia!" "God save the King!" "England for ever!"

Those who recalled the street scenes on Mafeking night declared they were as nothing compared with the wild and jubilant excitement of the present hour. Banners were slung across the streets; nearly every upper window displayed a flag of some sort; and, when darkness came, Chinese lanterns, lamps and candles, supplied the want of public lighting—which, however, was speedily restored.

Any sailor who was met with casually was hoisted shoulder-high and carried through the thoroughfares amid cheering crowds. Thousands stood bareheaded before the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square, while a young girl, with rapt face and glowing eyes, standing on the masonry, recited Tennyson's National Song:

"There is no land like England  
Where'er the light of day be;  
There are no hearts like English hearts—  
Such hearts of oak as they be."

A vast concourse also assembled before the broad façade of Buckingham Palace; and, undeterred by its silent emptiness and the

myriads of white blinds, all drawn down, shouted lustily and again and again for King and Queen. "Three cheers for the Navy!" roared a stentorian voice, and with a swift and mighty response the crowd gave not three cheers, but nearer thirty.

The next day, and the day after, and the day after that, the noise and the excitement were continued almost without abatement.

Meanwhile there had taken place at Windsor Castle, amid surroundings of quietude and regal dignity, an interview fraught with great import to England, to Germany, and to the whole of Europe.

Two mighty monarchs, constitutional rulers of great empires, came face to face, in circumstances of unexampled interest and embarrassment. It was a supreme moment, stupendous in the main problem that it presented, subtle and painful in the side-issues which that problem involved. For these were men, as well as monarchs. Not only were they men with like passions as we ourselves have, but the blood of a common ancestor flowed through the veins of each. The two were kith and kin.

Nothing mean or petty could be said or done by King or Kaiser in that trying hour. The salutation of royal personages must be exchanged after the custom of the

Courts. The ritual of State observance must be followed in all its detail. Yet, notwithstanding these formalities, each exalted personage was acutely conscious of the rough, the tragic, underlying elements of the unexampled situation.

Neither could forget in that ironic moment the bombastic utterances of the royal captive, the vapouring allusion to the "mailed fist," the "dry powder," the "taut muscles," and all the rest of it. Graver still were the recollections of the inspired press campaign against Great Britain, the manufactured grievances, the falsely imputed intrigues, all sequent to the unfriendly spirit shown in the memorable telegram to the President of the South African Republic. Worse than all was the evidence of enmity and jealousy afforded by the persistent increase of the German navy, the injurious uses to which Heligoland had been put, the enlargement of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, and the partial construction of a new naval base for the German fleet in the North Sea.

Vaulting ambition had inspired these things, the overmastering obsession of a supposed divine right of empire. The proud possessor of a giant's power had sought, and found, some pretext for gigantic deeds.

And now the cup of humiliation had been

presented to those proud lips. Like the great emperors of the past, whose dynasties had long lain in the dust, the modern monarch had to learn that kings propose, but One alone disposes; that He alone, above the water floods, "remains a King for ever." This, indeed, was no triumphal entry into England's capital. Not as William the Conqueror, but as William the Conquered, Kaiser William stood on English soil.

But if there was humiliation on the one side, there was on the other not only righteous wrath, but kingly magnanimity.

Of what precisely passed between the two august sovereigns no written record was preserved. They spoke as man to man. Nor was there any occasion for a formal treaty between the high contracting parties. King Edward, with the advice of his ministers, had already decided on the minimum of his requirements as representing the just demands of a great nation. Those requirements — absolutely inflexible, and not to be varied in any one particular — were as follows :

Heligoland was to be restored to the British Crown. The captured warships were to be incorporated in the British Navy. If the new naval base on the North Sea were not forthwith dismantled and abandoned, the British

fleet would bombard every German port in Europe.

It was said that the Kaiser listened with knitted brow, and, after a brief pause, asked quietly :

“ What assurances does your Majesty require ? ”

“ Your Majesty’s word of honour,” was the answer.

“ It is not intended to treat me as a hostage ? ”

“ Your Majesty is free.”



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF DEATH

FAR from the madding crowd of London, beyond sound of all the shouting and the tumult, they laid to rest, "each in his narrow cell," Father Francis and Billy of Mayfair. The priest, after lingering for two days, had died in Charing Cross Hospital from heart failure, resulting from the injuries he had sustained in the memorable meeting in Trafalgar Square. For the moment, and to all seeming, the Bottle had triumphed over the Bible; but the preacher of the higher truth, being dead, yet spoke to the hearts of thousands, and many journeyed down from London to attend his funeral.

It was the Duke, his father, who, hearing of Billy's boyish impulse to avenge the murderous attack on his favourite son, decided that the London waif, who had paid for his temerity with his life, should not sleep his last sleep in a pauper's grave. In life these two had

been separated by an enormous social gulf. Rank and culture belonged to the son of the ducal house. In his veins flowed the blood of royalty—the blood of a lecherous monarch of the House of Stuart. But Billy?—Well, what mattered now? Death, the great leveller, had made such questions quite superfluous. Duke's son and ragged outcast of the streets, they had entered into the same rest, and in death they were not divided.

On Ranmore, one of the loveliest of the Surrey hills, they ended together the little journey of their mortal lives. The sun shone brightly on the churchyard; far overhead great billowy clouds, slow and majestic, sailed across the illimitable blue. The snow had vanished from the rolling hills. It might have been a day in early spring.

“I am the resurrection and the life, said the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. . . . We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.”

When they came to the graveside, aristocrat and pauper came with the same promise of life and immortality. As each had borne the

image of the earthy, so each should bear the image of the heavenly. The boast of heraldry availed nothing. The pomp of power was as an idle tale. This was "the inevitable hour" for one and all!

The old duke, white-haired and tremulous, lifted his tired eyes to the far-off sky when they committed to the earth the body of his much-loved son. The old man was trying to grasp the "sure and certain hope!" He could not weep, as others wept, for "these our brothers."

But two stalwart men, standing close at hand, could not keep back their tears. There was a great lump in the bull throat of P.C. Dormer that nearly choked him when he looked on the last home of the child in the tragedy of whose life he had played a cruel and much-repented part. The strong, rough man had found a place for sorrow and remorse, and it was sanctified with tears.

And Joe the stableman, he, too, passed his huge red hand across his smarting eyes, sorrowing much that he would see his little friend no more.

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow and never continueth in one stay."

Yet, there remaineth a rest . . .

“I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead that die in the Lord : even so, saith the Spirit ; for they rest from their labours.”

In little groups, or one by one, the mourners went away ; Aldwyth and Herrick together, passing down the church path—and onward down the path of life. The tottering duke, leaning on his eldest son, went home to his great, dull mansion ; P.C. Dormer returned to night duty in the London streets ; Joe the stableman went back to his horses in the mews. All, all the living left the lonely dead. Thus, one day, will you and I be left, alone in our long last sleep.

The glow of the sun would wane ; darkness would shroud the graves ; the pale beams of the moon would rest there, and, in turn, the steely light of winter stars ; the strong spring breeze would bend the grass, and the daisies would cluster there ; the song of happy birds would come and go ; the tender bud of hope, and the red ripeness of the autumn leaf ; day-break and sunset over the hills ; summer and winter, seed-time and harvest,—till that great day of ripened grain, when the angels will be the reapers, and the harvest the end of the world.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ON the last day of the year there was a national service of thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral. The rushing river of national feeling, at first tumultuous like the sound of many waters, had found a channel, deep and broad. The waters, being deep, were therefore still. It was a joyful and a pleasant, but also a solemn thing to be thankful.

Vast numbers came from every quarter to attend the service; the highest and the lowest; the King and the Queen; the civic rulers; the restored judges of the land; the rich and the poor.

Here in the vast cathedral church in by-gone years the voice of praise and thanksgiving had been raised on memorable occasions; a thanksgiving for the King when, as heir to the throne of England, he had come back from the very jaws of death; a thanksgiving for the long and prosperous reign of a Queen dear to the hearts of her people; but

never before a thanksgiving such as this—so complex and so sudden in its causes, and following so swiftly on the perils from which the nation had been saved.

The newly appointed Primate of London—a former Bishop of Stepney—was the preacher; but it was no set sermon that he preached. His Grace gave out no text, but every heart was thrilled by what fell from his lips:

“Love thou thy land, with love far-brought  
From out the storied Past, and used  
Within the Present, but transfused  
Thro’ future time by power of thought.

He spoke of the patriotism that is sublime, and of the pride that goes before a fall: of

“True love turn’d round on fixed poles,  
Love that endures not sordid ends,  
For English natures, freemen, friends,  
Thy brothers, and immortal souls.”

True patriotism was instanced by the banished Jew, made cup-bearer to a heathen king, the man who sat down and wept when he learned that the walls of his beloved capital were broken down and the gates thereof burned with fire: the man who worked as well as wept; who inspired his compatriots and rebuilt the walls and gates of the city—trowel in one hand and sword in the other.

“ So built we the wall . . . for the people had a mind to work.”

Then the Primate turned to the wonderful story of the first Babylon. He spoke of the king who dreamed dreams wherewith his spirit was troubled, dreams that could only be interpreted—not by court magicians and astrologers—by the servant of One who changeth the times and seasons, removeth kings, giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He alone “revealeth the deep and secret things and knoweth what is in the darkness.”

Who should dare to say, demanded the Archbishop, that even now, in the twentieth century, the vision of the eastern king was not receiving fresh fulfilment—that mystical vision of the kingdom of gold, the kingdom of brass, and the kingdom of iron—iron that was mixed with miry clay ?

The king whose dreams troubled him had many warnings. When he set up his golden idol on the plain of Dura, he was warned. In his rage and fury with the Jews who dared to disobey him, he cast the three righteous men into the seven-fold heated furnace, and lo ! he saw four men walking loose in the midst of the fire, unhurt ; and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. Thus was he warned again.



So when the heart of Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up, and his mind hardened, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.

And Belshazzar his son, he, too, was warned by that mysterious writing on the wall. In that same night was he slain and Darius took the kingdom.

And the prophet himself had visions of the future, visions of nation fighting against nation; of the four winds of heaven striving upon the great sea; of the four great beasts that came up from the sea, diverse from each other—the first like a lion, the second like the bear, the third like a leopard, and the fourth dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, with teeth of iron. Who, again asked the preacher, should dare to say that the vision of the great sea and the great powers might not have further fulfilment among the nations and navies of to-day?

You Englishmen and Englishwomen, the Primate went on, leaning forward and looking into the myriads of upturned faces, should lay these thoughts to heart. The prophetic vision is not concerned with the kings of the earth alone. No king can stand without national support, and the nation is made up of individuals. Stands England where she did? Was Great Britain worthy of con-

tinued greatness, and able to maintain it? Think of her history! "England, bound in with the triumphant sea, whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege of watery Neptune." Would this dear England ever be "bound in with shame, with inky blots and rotten parchment bonds?" This England, that was wont to conquer others! If we loved England, then in a just quarrel we must fight for England, holding the "water-walled bulwarks still secure, and confident from foreign purposes,"—pulsing the "little body with a mighty heart." Each man must bear his part, a part worthy of his nationality, inspired with the belief of the English statesman whose statue stood in the heart of London—that life is a great and honourable calling, not a mean and grovelling thing to be shuffled through.

In some sense they had regarded themselves as a chosen people. Let them remember that older nation once chosen, but now scattered and oppressed. High above the towering dome of that cathedral where they worshipped, the cross stood out year after year—a warning, a symbol, an inspiration. It meant self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice was the watchword, and the example, of the great Captain of their salvation. Nothing would avail an England, or an Englishman,

ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, a deserter of the banner under which Christians were pledged to continue faithful soldiers and servants until their lives' end. A Christ-less England would be an England lost !

And how would England stand without the witness of the ancient Church in England ? The Babylonian king set up a god of gold on the plain of Dura ; but had not a god of gold been set up in many an English heart ? " Born a man, and died a grocer ! " Could epitaph be more withering in its contempt and irony ? Yet an honest grocer was better than a dishonest Christian. If we were a nation of shopkeepers and our only shrine was the till, let us at least be honest shopkeepers—not a nation of hypocrites as well ; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ! Yes, better an honest pagan than a bogus Christian.

A thrill went through the vast congregation, eagerly listening to the preacher's words ; and, as he paused, a pallid man, dressed in the fashion of the day, started to his feet, his hands outstretched, and cried with a loud voice, " What shall we do to be saved ? "

The effect was magnetic. At least five hundred persons instantly rose in like manner. It was manifest that they, too, in the awakened

anguish of their souls, sought an answer to that momentous question. The Archbishop, looking down on them, was greatly moved. For they were as sheep having no shepherd. Then he gave the answer, strong and vehement :

“ If you would be saved, away with shams and false pretences ! There is only one hope for humankind ; only one star to follow—the Star of Bethlehem. Guided by that blessed star, you can reach the port of peace.”

With hands covering their faces, the people, sobbing here and there, sank back into their seats.

The preacher continued in a ringing voice :

“ I demand, therefore, dost thou renounce the devil and all his works ? Dost thou renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh ? Dost thou, in very truth, renounce these things, or in thine heart of hearts dost thou mean to follow and be led by them ? ”

This time at least a thousand voices gave the answer : “ I renounce them all.”

“ Dost thou believe in the remission of sins ; the resurrection of the flesh ; and everlasting life after death ? What is your answer ? ”

The answer came from all the worshippers :  
“All this I steadfastly believe !”

“Remember,” said the preacher, “Christianity was a revelation ; not a rule of thumb. We must begin at the beginning, and remember our Creator in the days of our youth. Beware of sectarian quarrels, which keep the one Book worth all the others in the world from the children of the nation. How shall they learn without a teacher ?

“And you who are no longer children, beware of intellectual pride. If in this life only you have hope you are of all men most miserable. Do you refuse to believe in everything you cannot understand ? What stupendous folly ! What mad presumption ! Readers, scholars, writers, some of you, wise in your own conceits, you say you cannot credit anything outside the laws of Nature. But you and I and all of us as yet are only children crying in the night, and with no language but a cry. Only one man ever born into this world could understand Nature’s laws in all their fulness, and that Man was divine. Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther ! What men call supernatural may only be natural law on a plane beyond our ken. Nature works slowly and in evolutionary cycles. Yes ; but Nature also works—so far as human eyes can see—in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye—in tidal waves, the lightning flash, the earthquake; in volcanic outbursts, in the overwhelming avalanche. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and let no creature dare to limit the immeasurable powers of his Creator.

“Do you who disbelieve want your wives and children to be unbelievers? You don’t; but you leave it to them to worship in our churches. And you yourselves, if not unbelieving, at least half hearted, are holding feebly to the Faith with one hand, and with the other greedily grasping the pleasures of the world. Men of England, whither are you drifting? You cannot serve God and Mammon. Choose!—make your calling and election sure. Believe, as that man of towering intellect to whom this great church is dedicated, believed; as your own great countryman, William Ewart Gladstone, believed; as the great Lord Salisbury believed, and many another brilliant thinker who loved our England and her Church. Believe, as he believed who said, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

“Those who walk in pride, He is able to abase. Never suppose that in this little world, this ante-chamber of life, where our own armchairs outlive us, we shall see otherwise than darkly through a glass. Not yet

would be revealed the deep and secret things, and what is in the darkness. Patiently must we work out our national and our individual salvation, and with fear and trembling, lest what happened to the idolatrous nations of old should happen to ourselves. Wherein is London greatly better than Nineveh? Our idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Fire from heaven fell upon the Cities of the Plain. Is London free from what is earthly, sensual, devilish? Repent! Repent! lest this great Babylon, like that other Babylon, pass into nothingness.

“Never forget! The faith and the works of Christianity are indissolubly bound up with the strength and greatness of England. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”

Before the high altar, archbishop, bishops, dean, canons, and choristers, with glittering cross raised high, the organ pealing, raised the great song of praise. The long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults echoed the music of a nation's worship. The people knelt in humble adoration as they sang: “We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord: All the earth doth worship Thee: The Father Everlasting.”

It was a landmark in English history, a



national acknowledgment that the Most High ruled in the Kingdom of Men, appointing over it whomsoever He would.

\* \* \* \* \*

Twelve hours later the Old Year lay a-dying. Within the cathedral all was dark and silent. The voice of praise was hushed; the worshippers were gone. But the incense of adoration might be rising still, far above the mighty, shadowed dome, far above the night-encircled cross.

“Have you read in the Talmud of old,  
In the Legends the Rabbins have told  
Of the limitless realms of the air—  
Have you read it—the marvellous story  
Of Sandalphon, the Angel of Glory,  
Of Sandalphon, the Angel of Prayer?”

Erect—the Rabbins pictured the glorious angel, at the outermost gate of the City Celestial :

“And he gathers the prayers as he stands,  
And they change into flowers in his hands,  
Into garlands of purple and red ;  
And beneath the great arch of the portal,  
Through the streets of the City Immortal  
Is wafted the fragrance they shed.”

And now outside the cathedral another multitude had gathered ; saints and sinners, revellers and vulgarians. All sorts and conditions of men ; the drunk and the half-

drunk; the senseless bawlers of silly jokes; the maudlin bellowers of "Auld Lang Syne." But, after all, these noisy people were but the tide-tossed scum and flotsam upon the surface of a broad, strong stream. The crowd, like the nation, had had a lesson—stern, convincing—and it was sound at core.

As the solemn hour drew near, a scarcely-broken silence fell upon the multitude. From the hearts of many rose unspoken prayers.

High in the winter night the London bells were chiming, ringing the Old Year out, ringing the New Year in.

Hark to the bells! . . .

"The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells! . . .

The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

Hark, they are chiming still! . . .

"Ring out the feud of rich and poor  
Ring in redress to all mankind."

Chime on, chime on! . . .

"Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace."

Ring out! Ring in! . . .

"Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

The "faithless coldness of the times,"—was that, too, dying with the Old? Were "sweeter manners, purer laws" to dawn with the first daybreak of the New?

No answer came from earth or heaven. The deep and secret things were not revealed; none knew what was in the darkness of the future.

The ringers paused. Hush! the hour is striking.

The last vibration quivers on the air. Deep silence falls.

Then once again the bells ring out—clear-toned, hopeful, strong:

*"There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,  
And a new face at the door, my friend,  
A new face at the door!"*

THE END



